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LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

Library Edition

THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

EDITED BY ROBERT CHAMBERS

Library Edition

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME I

W. & R. CHAMBERS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLVI

270. a. 14.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The brilliant, painful history of Robert Burns has been written by seven of his countrymen, some of them men of no mean distinction in literature. His productions have appeared in numberless editions. It will probably excite surprise that a new life of the poet, in connection with a new edition of his writings, should have been ventured upon. My belief is, that if such a step can be justified at all, justification can only be presented in a satisfactory form in the resulting work. I must hope that the reader, in perusing these volumes, will see in them peculiarities which will make them appear as not a superfluity. Meanwhile, I may be permitted to state briefly the views under which I was induced to enter upon the undertaking.

When Burns died, so many offended Conventionalities brooded and whispered over his grave, that his first biographer, Dr Currie—anxious to conciliate public favour and beneficence to the widow and family—entered upon his task in a timid spirit. He aimed at no detail of the poet's life; he was contented to do little more than arrange reports on the subject from the poet himself, his brother Gilbert, Professor Stewart, Mr Syme, and others, and to accompany the narrative with certain dissertations on those institutional influences which affect the character of the Scottish peasant. It would even appear that, in his anxiety to avoid provoking any loud demonstration from those who took unfavourable views of the life and conversation of Burns, he allowed himself—unwittingly, no doubt—to go somewhat beyond the strict truth in his concessions as to the imputed faults of the unfortunate Bard. In the other part of his task, the publication of the poetical and prose writings of Burns, Dr Currie does not seem to have thought any particular effort at arrangement or illustration necessary. He chiefly confined himself to the duty of a pure and tasteful selection. It appears from his own letters that he afterwards saw possibilities of improvement, but these he did not live

to accomplish. This amiable man—who had given the leisure of several years to a task by which fourteen hundred pounds were realised for the poet's family—looking for no reward to himself beyond the happiness of succouring the helpless—died at a too early age in 1805, perhaps in some degree the victim of his benevolent exertions.

Of the other biographies of the poet, two deserve particular notice. That by Mr Lockhart, which appeared in 1828, has been universally accepted as a graceful treatment of the subject: kind, without being partial, towards Burns, and informed with a fine spirit of criticism. It adds, however, little to the details previously known; and certainly any effort made by the author to attain correctness in the statement and arrangement of facts, was far from what would appear to have been necessary in the case. The subsequent biography by Allan Cunningham gives a greater amount of fresh anecdote, and has much of the charm which belongs to the well-known manner of the writer. Yet, whether from defective opportunities—he had never, I believe, set his foot in Ayrshire—or a failure to apprehend and grapple with the difficulties of the subject, he seems to have also failed to produce a work which could leave nothing to be desired. In the meantime, the poems and letters of Burns remained in their original unconnected and unillustrated state, with such additions to Dr Currie's list as had been obtained by successive editors, or as had been through any accident attributed to him. I had myself contributed to an edition a series of historical, biographical, and topographical notes, the preparation of which had been the amusement of some of my younger years; but having never had my suspicions properly awakened as to the labours of previous editors, I made no attempt at any further editorial duty. Subsequent editors have amply availed themselves of these notes, indeed to a degree which seems inconsistent with literary rights; but they have left the selection and arrangement of the poet's works as they found it. I should vainly, however, endeavour to convey an adequate idea of the confusion and inaccuracy which I now behold in the many editions of Burns, including, of course, that in which I had myself some concern. This can only be done by presenting in contrast one in which at length a faithfully zealous, however imperfect, attempt is made to put the writings of Burns before the world, not merely with fidelity as to text (here there is little room for amendment), but with a just regard to the time and circumstances under which they left his pen, and with a rigid exclusion of all which cannot be with tolerable certainty affiliated to him.

Venerating the generous editorship of Currie, admiring the writings of other men regarding the life and character of Burns, and duly sensible, I hope, of my deficiency in many of their qualifications, I have nevertheless been led by a love of the subject to venture on the task of producing a new and duly ample memoir of the Great Peasant. It appeared to me that Burns's still growing reputation justified some attempt of this kind, and that the time was passing, and would soon be past, when it could be successfully made. I have, accordingly, entered upon a minute examination of all the

materials which exist for a biography of the poet, and collected new and authentic particulars from all available sources, including the memory of his youngest sister, Mrs Begg, who still survives. The writings of Burns—his Poems, Songs, and Letters—are most of them so expressly the coinage of his immediate experiences and feelings, that his life might be read in them alone. As hitherto arranged, each series might be likened to a fragmentary view of the poet's life, supplementary to the meagre memoir usually prefixed. So arranged, the biographic effect of the whole is either imperfectly developed, or lost by dissipation. It occurred to me—and I find that the same idea had latterly occurred to Allan Cunningham—that if the various compositions were strung in strict chronological order upon the memoir, they might be made to render up the whole light which they are qualified to throw upon the history of the life and mental progress of Burns, at the same time that a new significancy was given to them by their being read in connection with the current of events and emotions which led to their production. Such is the plan here adopted, and the result is not merely a great amount of new biographical detail, but a new sense, efficacy, and feeling, in the writings of the poet himself. It was not a task to be lightly accomplished. In ascertaining dates, in tracing the relations of writings to facts, and facts to writings, in checking mistakes not merely of biographers, but of the poet himself and his nearest relatives, and in verifying fresh information, a degree of labour has been encountered which seems surprising in regard to a poet who flourished only sixty years ago. It is only too probable that, in a subject found in so unfortunate a state, errors have not been avoided; but such as exist will, I hope, prove to be trivial; and I shall think little of my sacrifice of time in the case, if my countrymen shall join me in thinking that Burns deserved so much trouble being taken in recording the history of his life and writings.

As to the tone adopted regarding the *morale* of Burns, my wish has been, in a word, to write the truth with tenderness. To say that Burns was a man, is to say that he was not without infirmities. On this subject there has been much error on both sides, and the very prominence given to the subject has involved an injustice. I feel, for my own part, no hesitation in shewing Burns as the being of impulse and passion, subject, like other men, to occasional aberrations, which he actually was, but this in due subordination to the many admirable traits of character which shone in his life and writings. Regarding one whose brief life was one long hardship, relieved by little besides an ungainful excitement—who, during this singularly hapless career, did, on the whole, well maintain the grand battle of Will against Circumstances—who, strange to say, in the midst of his own poverty, conferred an inestimable and imperishable gift upon mankind—an Undying Voice for their finest sympathies—stamping at the same time more deeply the Divine doctrine of the fundamental equality of consideration due to all men—regarding such a one justice might perhaps be contented with less, but it could not well demand more. His writings involve much that one cannot but

think unhappily chosen in point of subject and allusion; but, after all, who could wish even those which are most infelicitous in this respect unwritten? I have not been rigorous in my selection of his writings—a few passages excepted—because I think that there is a disposition, both in the parties and descendants of persons whom certain of his poems once offended, to regard them as things having now only a literary interest, and to be judged of accordingly.

Such have been the views and principles under which the present work was prepared. It will be for the public to decide if such a task ought to have been undertaken, and if, its undertaking being justifiable, its execution has been befitting the subject.

1 Doune Terrace,
Edinburgh, *November* 25, 1850.

In presenting this reprint of the original popular edition, it seems only necessary to remark, that very little change of any kind has been made. I feel it to be an ample reward for many anxious efforts to carry historic accuracy into the minutest details of our Poet's life, that no error of any importance has been reported to me; neither has any remarkable omission been supplied. Only a few new lights have arisen on comparatively trivial points, and these are here duly taken advantage of. I have now, accordingly, the satisfaction of thinking that the work is at length as near to perfect correctness in matter of fact, as the nature of the subject will permit it to be.

April 10, 1856.

*** Italic letters indicate the publication devoted to his writings, in which, as far as ascertained, the various compositions of Burns were first included. The poems and songs marked *a* composed the first edition, published at Kilmarnock in 1786; those marked *b* were added in the second edition, published at Edinburgh in 1787; those marked *c* were added in the edition of 1793. These, with certain pieces which appeared in the early volumes of Johnson's Scots Musical Museum, and Thomson's Select Melodies of Scotland, were all that Burns himself committed to print; the rest, as well as his letters, have been published since his death. In this list of contents, the pieces published in Johnson's Museum are marked *d*; the poems and letters presented in Currie's first edition of the poet's works in 1800 are marked *e*; those added in the second edition, *f*; those published by Stewart of Glasgow in 1801, *g*; those in Cromek's Reliques of Burns, 1808, *h*; those in Lockhart's Life of Burns, *i*; those in Cunningham's edition, 1834, *j*; those in Hogg and Motherwell's edition, 1834-6, *k*; those in the People's Edition of Messrs Chambers, 1838-40, *l*; those in Blackie's edition, 1846, *m*; those added in the present work, *n*; an asterisk being given in certain cases where it is ascertained that the poem or letter was previously sent forth fugitively.

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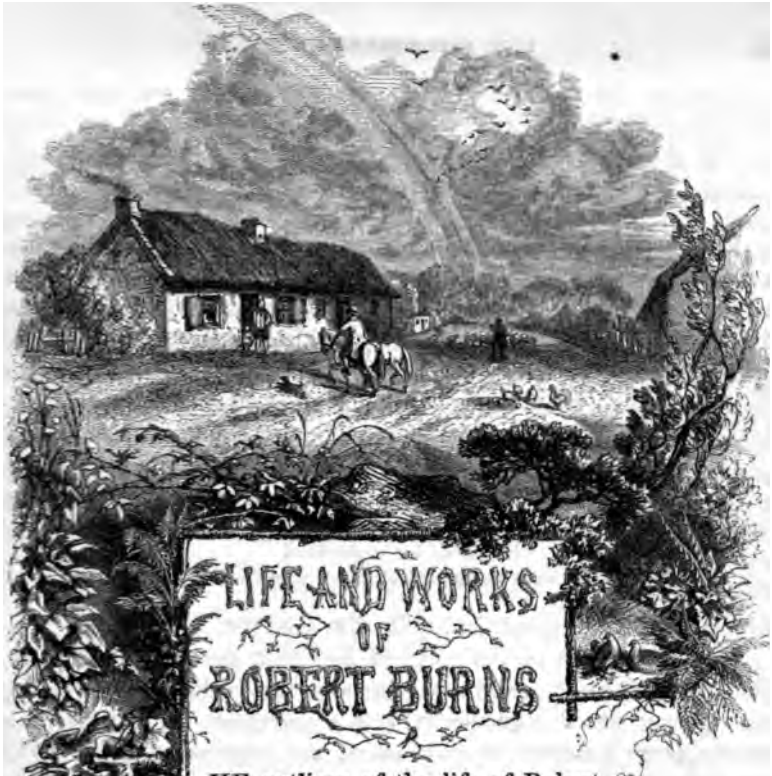

THE outlines of the life of Robert Burns are generally familiar. He was born on the 25th of January 1759, the eldest son of an Ayrshire peasant. He became a farmer on a small scale, and for some years held his own plough. He wrote poems chiefly in the Scottish vernacular tongue, and thus attracted the attention of his countrymen. Thereafter, he accepted the situation of a revenue-officer, and died at Dumfries on the 21st July 1796, in the thirty-eighth year of his age. His fame was great in his lifetime, and it quickly grew greater: for vivid thought and feeling, and for exquisite felicity of expression, it was seen that no contemporary productions approached his. Yet it was long before men could shake off an idea, derogatory in its general bearing, that Burns was only a wonderful peasant. Truer justice appears now to be done to him. It is beginning to be, if it is not now fully perceived, that he was one of the greatest of poetical spirits, without any regard to the accidental circumstances of birth and education—circumstances which may enhance his merits, but ought not to take from them.

ALLOWAY—MOUNT OLIPHANT.

1759—1777.

Burns, after he became known as a poet (August 1787), communicated an account of the previous twenty-eight years of his life to the novelist, Dr John Moore, who had become warmly interested in his behalf. The portion referring to his parentage, boyhood, and education, is as follows:—'I have not the most distant pretensions to assume that character which the pie-coated guardians of escutcheons call a gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted in the Herald's Office; and looking through that granary of honours, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

"My ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood."

Gules, Purpure, Argent, &c., quite disowned me.

'My father was of the north of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large, where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom. I have met with few who understood *men, their manners, and their ways,* equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son. For the first six or seven years of my life, my father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had he continued in that station, I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farmhouse; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye till they could discern between good and evil; so, with the assistance of his generous master, my father ventured on a small farm on his estate. At those years I was by no means a favourite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot piety. I say *idiot* piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my

infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery.[1] This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry, but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, "How are thy servants blest, O Lord!" I particularly remember one stanza, which was music to my boyish ear:

> "For though on dreadful whirls we hung
> High on the broken wave."

I met with these pieces in *Mason's English Collection*, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were the *Life of Hannibal*, and the *History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest.

'Polemical divinity about this time was putting the country half mad; and I, ambitious of shining in conversation-parties on Sundays, between sermons, at funerals, &c., used, a few years afterwards, to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised a hue-and-cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

'My vicinity to Ayr was of some advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modification of spirited pride, was, like our Catechism definition of infinitude, *without bounds or limits*. I formed several connections with other younkers who possessed superior advantages—the *youngling* actors, who

[1] See *postea* a note regarding this female.

were busy in the rehearsal of parts in which they were shortly to appear on the stage of life, where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at this green age that our young gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged playfellows. It takes a few dashes into the world to give the young great man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who were perhaps born in the same village. My young superiors never insulted the *clouterly* appearance of my ploughboy carcass, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books: among them, even then, I could pick up some observations; and one, whose heart I am sure not even the *Munny Begum* scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors, as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction; but I was soon called to more serious evils.[1] My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and to clench the misfortune, we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my tale of "Twa Dogs." My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children; and he, worn out by early hardships, was unfit for labour. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more; and to weather these two years, we retrenched our expenses. We lived very poorly. I was a dexterous ploughman for my age; and the next eldest to me

[1] 'My brother,' says Gilbert Burns, 'seems to set off his early companions in too consequential a manner. The principal acquaintance we had in Ayr, while boys, were four sons of Mr Andrew M'Culloch, a distant relation of my mother's, who kept a tea-shop, and had made a little money in the contraband trade, very common at that time. He died while the boys were young, and my father was nominated one of the tutors. The two eldest were bred shopkeepers; the third, a surgeon; and the youngest, the only surviving one, was bred in a counting-house in Glasgow, where he is now a respectable merchant. I believe all these boys went to the West Indies. Then there were two sons of Dr Malcolm, whom I have mentioned in my letter to Mrs Dunlop. The eldest, a very worthy young man, went to the East Indies, where he had a commission in the army; he is the person whose heart, my brother says, the *Munny Begum scenes could not corrupt*. The other, by the interest of Lady Wallace, got an ensigncy in a regiment raised by the Duke of Hamilton during the American war. I believe neither of them are now (1797) alive. We also knew the present Dr Paterson of Ayr, and a younger brother of his, now in Jamaica, who were much younger than us. I had almost forgot to mention Dr Charles of Ayr, who was a little older than my brother, and with whom we had a longer and closer intimacy than with any of the others, which did not, however, continue in after-life.'

was a brother (Gilbert) who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash the corn. A novel-writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at the recollection of the scoundrel factor's insolent threatening letters, which used to set us all in tears.

'This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave—brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idiom—she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass.* In short, she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell: you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c., but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed, I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities she sang sweetly; and it was her favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sang a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love, and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting that he could smear sheep and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself.

'Thus with me began love and poetry, which at times have been my only, and, till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment. My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles further in the country. The nature of the bargain he made was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands

at the commencement of his lease; otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a difference commencing between him and his landlord as to terms, after three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in, and carried him away to *where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.*

'It is during the time that we lived on this farm that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward boy in the parish—no *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. What I knew of ancient story was gathered from *Salmon's and Guthrie's Geographical Grammars;* and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature and criticism, I got from the *Spectator.* These, with *Pope's Works,* some plays of *Shakspeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, The Pantheon, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener's Directory, Bayle's Lectures,*[1] *Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs,* and *Hervey's Meditations,* had formed the whole of my reading.[2] The collection of songs was my *vade mecum.* I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse—carefully noting the true, tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian.[3] I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.

'In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings, and my going was, what to this moment I repent, in opposition to his wishes. My father, as I said before, was subject to strong passions; from that instance of

[1] I can hear of no such book as *Bayle's Lectures.* It is probably a misprint of Currie (who makes many such mistakes) for a work specified in the article of appendix next referred to.

[2] See Appendix, 3.

[3] According to the recollection of Mrs Begg, the poet's youngest sister, he first possessed a copy of the well-known *Tea-Table Miscellany* of Allan Ramsay—a collection of songs, including many by the worthy editor himself. At a later period, he obtained a collection of songs entitled *The Lark.* The first volume of the latter work is before us. Its title-page is as follows:—'*The Lark, being a Select Collection of the most Celebrated and Newest Songs, Scots and English.* Edinburgh, printed for W. Gordon, Bookseller in the Parliament Close. 1765.' It contains many of the best Scottish songs, and a few ballads, as Gil Morris, The Babes in the Wood, and Hamilton's Braes of Yarrow, but mixed up, it must be allowed, with a more than sufficient quantity of 'affectation and fustian.'

disobedience in me, he took a sort of dislike to me, which I believe was one cause of the dissipation which marked my succeeding years. I say dissipation, comparatively with the strictness, and sobriety, and regularity of Presbyterian country life; for though the Will-o'-wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue kept me for several years afterwards within the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was—to want an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune was the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance! Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark; a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly to solitude; add to these incentives to social life my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense, and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any great wonder that always where two or three met together, there was I among them. But far beyond all other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain.* My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and as in every other warfare in this world my fortune was various, sometimes I was received with favour, and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and thus I set absolute want at defiance; and as I never cared further for my labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a love adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions; and I daresay I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Torbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe. The very goose-feather in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song, and is

with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the love adventures of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farmhouse and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice, baptise these things by the name of follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty, they are matters of the most serious nature; to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious parts of their enjoyments.'

William Burness (for so he spelt his name), the father of the poet, was a native of Kincardineshire. He had been reared on the estate of Dunnottar, which had been forfeited by the Keith Marischal family in 1716. Whether from this circumstance, or from some family tradition, the poet was fain to think that his immediate forefathers had been actively engaged in promoting the cause of the Stuarts. His brother Gilbert discountenanced the idea; but it is not certain that the poet was so much in error as his brother thought. Family misfortunes, we are told by Gilbert, compelled William Burness and a younger brother to leave the paternal mansion at an early age in search of employment and subsistence. 'I have often,' says Gilbert, 'heard my father describe the anguish of mind he felt when they parted on the top of a hill on the confines of their native place, each going off his several way in search of new adventures, and scarcely knowing whither he went. My father,' he adds, 'undertook to act as a gardener, and shaped his course to Edinburgh, where he wrought hard when he could get work,[1] passing through a variety of difficulties. Still, however, he endeavoured to spare something for the support of his aged parents; and I recollect hearing him mention his having sent a bank-note for this purpose, when money of that kind was so scarce in Kincardineshire that they scarcely knew how to employ it when it arrived.'[2]

It may be mentioned that an elder brother settled in Montrose, and attained such respectability as to be many years a town-councillor and elder in the church. His son, a legal practitioner in the same town, was grandfather of Sir Alexander Burnes, killed at Cabul in 1842.

William Burness at length migrated to Ayrshire, where he successively served the Laird of Fairlie and Mr Crawford of

[1] It is ascertained that the poet's father worked for some time at the formation of the walks of what is called Hope Park, a beautiful promenade adjacent to the southern suburbs of the Scottish capital. This was probably about 1749.

[2] See Appendix, No. 1.

Doonside as gardener. He then took a lease of seven acres of land near the Bridge of Doon, designing to carry on business as a nurseryman. He built on this ground a clay cottage with his own hands, and in December 1757 brought to it a young bride named Agnes Brown, the daughter of a Carrick farmer. In this humble dwelling their eldest child, the poet, saw the light thirteen months after.[1]

Gilbert Burns related to Dr Currie a circumstance attending the birth of the poet. 'When my father,' he says, 'built his clay bigging, he put in two stone jambs, as they are called, and a lintel, carrying up a chimney in his clay gable. The consequence was, that as the gable subsided, the jambs, remaining firm, threw it off its centre; and one very stormy morning, when my brother was nine or ten days old, a little before daylight, a part of the gable fell out, and the rest appeared so shattered, that my mother, with the young poet, had to be carried through the storm to a neighbour's house, where they remained a week, till their own dwelling was adjusted.' Gilbert adds—'That you may not think too meanly of this house, or my father's taste in building, by supposing the poet's description in "The Vision" (which is entirely a fancy picture) applicable to it, allow me to take notice to you that the house consisted of a kitchen in one end and a room in the other, with a fireplace and chimney; that my father had constructed a concealed bed in the kitchen, with a small closet at the end, of the same materials with the house; and when altogether cast over, outside and in, with lime, it had a neat, comfortable appearance, such as no family of the same rank, in the present improved style of living, would think themselves ill lodged in.'

William Burness, himself a man of uncommon intelligence for his station in life, was anxious that his children should have the best education which their circumstances admitted of. Robert was therefore sent in his sixth year to a little school at Alloway Mill, about a mile from their cottage: not long after, his father took a lead in establishing a young teacher, named John Murdoch, in

[1] The entry of the poet's birth in the session-books of Ayr parish is as follows:—'Robert Burns, lawful son of William Burns in Alloway, and Agnes Brown his spouse, was born January 25th, 1759: baptised by Mr William Dalrymple. Witnesses, John Tennant and James Young.' It is remarkable that the name is here spelt in the manner afterwards assumed by the poet. The explanation is, that the name was already established in Ayrshire, and usually spelt in this manner. Mr Dalrymple survived to know Burns as a poet, and to be a subject of panegyric in his verses.

[illegible]

[illegible] upon the [illegible] Betty Davidson's [illegible] as a gift to Mrs [illegible]. They were not to [illegible] large amber-beads were obtained [illegible] strung for this purpose.

up, in consequence of its master obtaining a superior situation elsewhere. Gilbert remembered a circumstance occurring at this time, which he thought illustrative of his brother's character: 'Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us, as a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English Grammar, and the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*, and by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have but a confused remembrance of it) had her hands chopped off, and her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed, that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied, that if it were left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness; but Murdoch interfered, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left the *School for Love*, a comedy, translated, I think, from the French, in its place.'

William Burness from this time took upon himself the duty of instructing his two sons and other children. 'Nothing,' continues Gilbert, 'could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age or near it in the neighbourhood. Indeed the greatest part of the land in the vicinity was at that time possessed by shopkeepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm in the country, at the same time that they followed business in town. My father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men; and was at great pains, as we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm us in virtuous habits. He borrowed Salmon's *Geographical Grammar* for us, and endeavoured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while from a book-society in Ayr he procured for us the reading of Derham's *Physico and Astro-Theology*, and Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber

to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, then lately published by James Meuros in Kilmarnock: from this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history; for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches. A brother of my mother, who had lived with us some time, and had learnt some arithmetic by our winter evening's candle, went into a bookseller's shop in Ayr to purchase the *Ready Reckoner, or Tradesman's Sure Guide*, and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in place of the *Complete Letter Writer*, he got by mistake a small collection of letters by the most eminent writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. This book was to Robert of the greatest consequence. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language.

'My brother was about thirteen or fourteen when my father, regretting that we wrote so ill, sent us, week about, during a summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple, which, though between two and three miles distant, was the nearest to us, that we might have an opportunity of remedying this defect. About this time a bookish acquaintance of my father's procured us a reading of two volumes of Richardson's *Pamela*, which was the first novel we read, and the only part of Richardson's works my brother was acquainted with, till towards the period of his commencing author. Till that time, too, he remained unacquainted with Fielding, with Smollett (two volumes of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and two volumes of *Peregrine Pickle*, excepted), with Hume, with Robertson, and almost all our authors of eminence of the later times. I recollect, indeed, my father borrowed a volume of English history from Mr Hamilton of Bourtreehill's gardener. It treated of the reign of James I. and his unfortunate son Charles, but I do not know who was the author; all that I remember of it is something of Charles's conversation with his children. About this time, Murdoch, our former teacher, after having been in different places in the country, and having taught a school some time in Dumfries, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr, a circumstance of considerable consequence to us. The remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do everything in his power for our improvement. He sent us *Pope's Works*, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in the English Collection,

and in the volume of the *Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also *those excellent new songs* that are hawked about the country in baskets, or exposed on stalls in the streets.

'The summer after we had been at Dalrymple School, my father sent Robert to Ayr, to revise his English grammar with his former teacher. He had been there only one week, when he was obliged to return to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over, he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter, some time afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirkoswald (where he lived with a brother of my mother's) to learn surveying.

'During the two last weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French,[1] and he communicated the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and, through the medium of Murdoch, procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at that time gabbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation.

'Observing the facility with which he had acquired the French language, Mr Robinson, the established writing-master in Ayr, and Mr Murdoch's particular friend, having himself acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin language by his own industry,

[1] Mr Tennant of Ayr, in 1838 one of the few surviving early friends of Burns, had the following recollections respecting him:—'He first knew the poet when attending Mr Murdoch's school at Ayr, he being then fifteen, and Burns a year and a half older. Burns and he were favourite pupils of Murdoch, who used to take them alternately to live with him, allowing them a share of his bed. Mr Murdoch was a well-informed and zealous teacher—a particularly good French scholar, insomuch that he at one time taught the language in France. He thought his voice had some peculiar quality or power, adapting it in an uncommon degree for French pronunciation. Murdoch was so anxious to advance his two favourite pupils, that, while they were lying with him, he was always taking opportunities of communicating knowledge. The intellectual gifts of Burns, even at this time, greatly impressed his fellow-scholar. Robert and Gilbert Burns were like no other young men. Their style of language was quite above that of their compeers. Robert had borrowed great numbers of books, and acquainted himself with their contents. He read rapidly, but remembered all that was interesting or valuable in what he read. He had the New Testament more at command than any other youth ever known to Mr Tennant, who was altogether more impressed in these his boyish days by the discourse of the youthful poet, than he afterwards was by his published verses.'

without ever having learnt it at school, advised Robert to make the same attempt, promising him every assistance in his power. Agreeably to this advice, he purchased the *Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*, but finding this study dry and uninteresting, it was quickly laid aside. He frequently returned to his Rudiments on any little chagrin or disappointment, particularly in his love affairs; but the Latin seldom predominated more than a day or two at a time, or a week at most. Observing himself the ridicule that would attach to this sort of conduct if it were known, he made two or three humorous stanzas on the subject, which I cannot now recollect; but they all ended,

"So I'll to my Latin again."

'Thus you see Mr Murdoch was a principal means of my brother's improvement. Worthy man! though foreign to my present purpose, I cannot take leave of him without tracing his future history. He continued for some years a respected and useful teacher at Ayr, till one evening that he had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr he might as well have spoken blasphemy. He found it proper to give up his appointment. He went to London, where he still lives (1797), a private teacher of French.[1]

'The father of Dr Paterson, now physician at Ayr, was, I believe, a native of Aberdeenshire, and was one of the established teachers in Ayr when my father settled in the neighbourhood. He early recognised my father as a fellow-native of the north of Scotland, and a certain degree of intimacy subsisted between them during Mr Paterson's life. After his death, his widow, who is a very genteel woman, and of great worth, delighted in doing what she thought her husband would have wished to have done, and assiduously kept up her attentions to all his acquaintance. She kept alive the intimacy with our family, by frequently inviting my

[1] Mr John Murdoch died April 20, 1824, aged seventy-seven. He had published a *Radical Vocabulary of the French Language*, 12mo, 1788; *Pronunciation and Orthography of the French Language*, 8vo, 1788; *Dictionary of Distinctions*, 8vo, 1811; and other works. He was a highly amiable and worthy man. In his latter days, illness had reduced him to the brink of destitution, and an appeal was made to the friends and admirers of his illustrious pupil in his behalf. Some money was thus raised, and applied to the relief of his necessities. It is stated in the obituary notice of Mr Murdoch, published in the London papers, that he had taught English in London to several distinguished foreigners; among the rest, to the celebrated Talleyrand, during his residence as an emigrant in England.

father and mother to her house on Sundays, when she met them at church.

'When she came to know my brother's passion for books, she kindly offered us the use of her husband's library, and from her we got the *Spectator*, *Pope's Translation of Homer*, and several other books that were of use to us. Mount Oliphant, the farm my father possessed in the parish of Ayr, is almost the very poorest soil I know of in a state of cultivation. A stronger proof of this I cannot give than that, notwithstanding the extraordinary rise in the value of lands in Scotland, it was, after a considerable sum laid out in improving it by the proprietor, let a few years ago five pounds per annum lower than the rent paid for it by my father thirty years ago. My father, in consequence of this, soon came into difficulties, which were increased by the loss of several of his cattle by accidents and disease. To the buffetings of misfortune we could only oppose hard labour, and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years under these straits and difficulties was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty), broken down with the long-continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances; these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.'

The reader will have caught from these narrations some notion of the domestic scene and characters amongst which the poet was brought up. Their superiority to ordinary cottage-life in most countries, must have been cordially acknowledged. The father, however, has not yet been fully depicted. Dr Currie says: 'The father of our poet is described by one who knew him towards

the latter end of his life as above the common stature, thin, and bent with labour. His countenance was serious and expressive, and the scanty locks on his head were gray. He was of a religious turn of mind, and, as is usual among the Scottish peasantry, a good deal conversant in speculative theology. There is in Gilbert's hands a little manual of religious belief, in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son, composed by him for the use of his children, in which the benevolence of his heart seems to have led him to soften the rigid Calvinism of the Scottish Church into something approaching to Arminianism. He was a devout man, and in the practice of calling his family together to join in prayer. It is known that the following exquisite picture in the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, represents William Burness and his family at their evening devotions:—

"The cheerful supper done, with serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide; fire
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big *hall*-Bible, once his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare; gray temples
Those strains that once did sweet in Sion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care; chooses
And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's*[1] wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*,[1] worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin*[1] beets the heavenly flame, adds fuel to
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays;
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickled ears no heartfelt raptures raise;
No unison have they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,[2]
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;

[1] Names of tunes in Scottish psalmody. The tunes mentioned in this poem are the three which were used by William Burness, who had no greater variety.

[2] The course of family devotion among the people of Scotland is—first to sing a psalm; then to read a portion of Scripture; and, lastly, to kneel down in prayer.

Or how the royal bard did groaning lie,
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;
How his first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land;
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced, by Heaven's command!

Then kneeling down, to heaven's eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband, prays;
'Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
That thus they all shall meet in future days;
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

* * * * *

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent pair their secret homage pay,
And offer up to Heaven the warm request:
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside!"'

Mr Murdoch has given some further description of the worthy man and his household, first mentioning a fact in itself most remarkable as regarding William Burness, that he and four of his neighbours engaged this young teacher to instruct their children, on the understanding that he was to be boarded amongst them, besides receiving a small salary. He says: 'My pupil, Robert Burns, was then between six and seven years of age; his preceptor, about eighteen. Robert, and his younger brother, Gilbert, had

been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading, and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences, &c., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were the *Spelling-Book*, the *New Testament*, the *Bible*, Mason's *Collection of Prose and Verse*, and Fisher's *English Grammar*. They committed to memory the hymns and other poems of that collection with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was, to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence that was to be committed to memory. By the by, this may be easier done, and at an earlier period, than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know, are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.[1]

'Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit, than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, *Mirth, with thee I mean to live;* and certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the Muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.

'In the year 1767 [1766], Mr Burness quitted his mud edifice, and took possession of a farm—Mount Oliphant—of his own improving, while in the service of Provost Ferguson. This farm being at a considerable distance from the school, the boys could not attend regularly; and some changes taking place among the

[1] It will here be observed that Burns possessed the accidental, but great advantage, of acquiring his learning under a master who had anticipated several of the chief improvements which have since been introduced into tuition.

other supporters of the school, I left it, having continued to conduct it for nearly two years and a half.

'In the year 1772 I was appointed—being one of five candidates who were examined—to teach the English school at Ayr; and in 1773, Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising English grammar, &c., that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week, I told him, that as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, &c., I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation; that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship, officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage.

'Now, there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, &c. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus* in Fénélon's own words.

'But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and, armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalising himself in the fields of Ceres; and so he did, for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

'Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and, consequently, agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English, and the other two, chiefly in that of French. I did not, however, lose sight of him, but was a frequent visitant at his father's house, when I had my half-holiday; and very often went, accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself, that good William Burness might enjoy a mental feast. Then the labouring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation, wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and a moderate seasoning of jocularity, were so nicely

blended, as to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about the French, &c.; and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs Burness, too, was of the party as much as possible:

> "But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
> Which ever as she could with haste despatch,
> She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
> Devour up their discourse"——

and particularly that of her husband. At all times, and in all companies, she listened to him with a more marked attention than to anybody else. When under the necessity of being absent while he was speaking, she seemed to regret, as a real loss, that she had missed what the good man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him; for I myself have always considered William Burness as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with—and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph (borrowed from Goldsmith),

> "And even his failings leaned to virtue's side."

He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner, and from her affectionate behaviour to him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

'He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue; not in driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but very seldom; and, therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe with the *tawz*, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heartfelt pain, produced a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

'He had the art of gaining the esteem and good-will of those that were labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice: the one time it was with the foreman of the band for not reaping the field as he was desired; and the other time it was

with an old man for using smutty inuendoes and *double entendres*. Were every foul-mouthed old man to receive a seasonable check in this way, it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that passive, pitiful, paltry spirit, that induces some people to *keep booing and booing* in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with a becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arrogance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burness. Time would fail me. I shall only add, that he carefully practised every known duty, and avoided everything that was criminal; or, in the Apostle's words, *Herein did he exercise himself, in living a life void of offence towards God and towards men.* O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions: then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

'Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive, from these few particulars, what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety—both with respect to diction and pronunciation—than any man I ever knew with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men, much sooner than their neighbours.'

We see in these narratives, that Robert Burns was the child of poverty and toil, but that there were fortunate circumstances in his position. The first of these was his having parents of such singular excellence, and particularly his having for a father one who was a perfect model of humble intelligence and worth. The mother of Burns is described as having been an excellent specimen of the prudent cottage matrons of Scotland—calm in her demeanour, careful of her household, conscientious in discharging the duty she owed to her children, and full of veneration for her husband. She had, however, no pretensions to superior intellect, or to any education above that of her compeers.[1] Those who are so gallant

[1] See Appendix, No. 2.

to the gentler sex as to believe that extraordinary talents are *always* inherited through the mother, have here an instance against their theory, for, beyond doubt, those of Burns were derived, along with a keenly nervous temperament, from his father. In all that has been recorded of this person, we can see the traits of one of Nature's gentlemen. Under an exterior which extreme reserve rendered somewhat repulsive, the elder Burns carried an intelligent mind and genial affections. Thrown amongst people beneath him in intellect, he seems to have withdrawn into himself, and hence it was that to an observer of a different rank he seemed chill and austere, if not dull. But, as one of his son's biographers has observed, 'when he found a companion to his taste, with whom he could make a fair exchange of mind, he seemed to grow into a different being, or into one suddenly restored to his native element.'[1] In this respect it will be found that his son was exactly his second self. William Burness had taken upon himself the cares of a farm, hazarding the troubles arising in that mode of life from want of capital, that he might have occupation for his children at home, instead of sending them forth to take their chance of demoralisation amongst strangers. He exerted himself as their instructor, and, cottager as he was, contrived to have something like the benefits of private tuition for his two eldest sons. The mind which dictated such sacrifices for a high principle, could not be one of a common mould. And here it was that we find the second of the fortunate circumstances of Burns. By the father's model of life, and the teaching which his liberality secured, the young poet became, comparatively speaking, a well-educated man; for so undoubtedly may he be considered who has been trained by precept and example as a moral being, and taught the use of at least the golden keys which unlock the stores of knowledge. In Scotland, it may be remarked, such self-sacrifice on the part of parents for their children is the rule, and not the exception. Indeed, it forms one of those glories of the Scottish character of past primitive days, which it may be difficult to replace by anything of equal value in the different state of society which seems approaching. Yet even in Scotland the exertions of William Burness for the education of his two boys are of so extraordinary a character, that one is tempted to surmise some motive beyond what appears. Such may perhaps be found in the sense which we now learn William Burness possessed of the character of his children. He

[1] Walker's *Life of Burns.*

had remarked, we are told,[1] from a very early period, the bright intellect of his elder born in particular, saying to his wife: 'Whoever may live to see it, something extraordinary will come from that boy!' It is affecting to think of the difficulties and privations which this paragon of cottage sires encountered for the sake of his offspring, and to reflect that by their consequences he was made an old man before his time, and brought down in sorrow to the grave. Of such metal, however, were the peasantry of Scotland in those old days which never can return.

In other circumstances, the lot of Burns was a hard one. He fully shared in the hardships incurred by his father for the sake of his children. While still a boy in years—from thirteen to fifteen—he was called upon, by stern necessity, to do, if possible, the work of a man. He undertook and performed this duty; but high motive will not procure an exemption from physical evil. By hard labour, thus prematurely undergone, without the support of a sufficient diet, his naturally robust frame was severely injured. Externally, the consequences appeared in a stoop of the shoulders, which never left him; but internally, in the more serious form of mental depression, attended by a nervous disorder, which affected the movements of the heart. The unsocial life which a high-principled economy dictated in his father's household at Mount Oliphant, further rendered him, by his own acknowledgment, a rude and clownish *solitaire*. He admits that he was not at that time a popular character. Under 'the cheerless gloom of a hermit, and the unceasing moil of a galley-slave'—as yet unsoftened by the gentler passions—it was not likely that he should shine forth as a favourite. The first touch of an emotion which afterwards gushed upon him, was experienced in his seventeenth autumn on the harvest-field, the cause being that 'bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass,' a year younger than himself, who had been assigned to him as the partner of his labours; Nelly Kilpatrick by name, and the daughter of the same blacksmith, it appears, who lent him his first book, the *Life of Wallace*.[2] This simple girl sang a song which had been composed by a neighbouring country lad, and Burns thought he might be able to compose a song too. He, therefore, made one upon the charms of his handsome Nell—'very puerile and silly,' he afterwards confessed, and the honest reader will scarcely reverse the judgment—but then, he adds: 'I composed it in a wild

[1] Such is the report of the sister of the poet, Mrs Begg.
[2] From the recollection of Mrs Begg.

enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies at the remembrance.' It was as follows :—

HANDSOME NELL.

TUNE—*I am a Man Unmarried.*

Oh once I loved a bonnie lass,
  Ay, and I love her still;
And whilst that honour warms my breast,
  I 'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonnie lasses I hae seen,
  And mony full as braw; well dressed
But for a modest, gracefu' mien,
  The like I never saw.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,
  Is pleasant to the ee,
But without some better qualities,
  She 's no the lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blithe and sweet,
  And, what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
  And fair without a flaw.[1]

She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
  Both decent and genteel:
And then there 's something in her gait
  Gars ony dress look weel. Makes

A gaudy dress and gentle air
  May slightly touch the heart;
But it 's innocence and modesty
  That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
  'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
  She reigns without control.

[1] Variation in Mr John Dick's MS. :—

But Nelly's looks are blithe and sweet,
  Good-humoured, frank, and free;
And still the more I view them o'er,
  The more they captive me.

The next verse is wanting in that MS.

LOCHLEA.

1777—1784.

William Burness lingered out twelve years in the ungenial glebe of Mount Oliphant, and at Whitsunday 1777, removed to a somewhat more promising farm called Lochlea—pronounced Lochly—in the parish of Torbolton. The country is here composed of an undulating upland, rising from the right or north bank of the river Ayr, generally from three to five hundred feet above the level of the sea, and of bare and unattractive aspect. The views, however, which are obtained from some of the braes, are at once extensive and beautiful, comprehending the hills of Carrick in front, and the Firth of Clyde, with its romantic islands, on the right hand. The farm seems to have obtained its name from a small lake in its neighbourhood, one of a number of such pieces of water which once interspersed this district of Ayrshire, but are now for the most part drained, or reduced to marshes. William Burness took this farm of 130 acres at twenty shillings an acre, which seems a high rent for ground so situated seventy years ago.

For some time the life of the family seems to have been more tolerable at Lochlea than it had been at any previous period, probably in the main because the young people were now able to render their parents such assistance as to save them some outlay for labour. They all worked to the extent of their ability, and none more heartily or efficiently than the poet. It was at this time, according to the recollection of his sister, that he went for a short time to learn dancing. Now also occurred a short episode in his life, of which he has given a brief account in his letter to Dr Moore:—

'Another circumstance in my life which made some alteration in my mind and manners was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a

high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my *sines* and *co-sines* for a few days more; but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,

> "Like Proserpine, gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower"——

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I stayed, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.'

The scene of this adventure was Kirkoswald, in Carrick. If the poet be right in speaking of his nineteenth summer, the date must have been 1777. What seems to have suggested his going to Kirkoswald school, was the connection of his mother with that parish. She was the daughter of Gilbert Brown, farmer of Craigenton, in this parochial division of Carrick, in which she had many friends still living, particularly a brother, Samuel Brown, who resided, in the miscellaneous capacity of farm-labourer, fisherman, and dealer in wool, at the farmhouse of Ballochneil, above a mile from the village of Kirkoswald. Samuel, though not the farmer or guidman of the place, was a person held to be in creditable circumstances in a district where the distinction between master and servant was, and still is, by no means great. His wife was the sister of Niven, the tenant; and he lived in the 'chamber' or better portion of the farmhouse, but was now a widower. It was with Brown that Burns lived during his attendance at Kirkoswald School, walking every morning to the village where the little seminary of learning was situated, and returning at night.

The district into which the young poet of Kyle was thus thrown has many features of a remarkable kind. Though situated on the shore of the Firth of Clyde, where steamers are every hour to be seen on their passage between enlightened and busy cities, it is to this day the seat of simple and patriarchal usages. Its land, composed of bleak green uplands, partly cultivated, and partly pastoral, was, at the time alluded to, occupied by a generation of primitive small farmers, many of whom, while preserving their native simplicity, had superadded to it some of the irregular habits

arising from a concern in the trade of introducing contraband goods on the Carrick coast.[1] Such dealings did not prevent superstition from flourishing amongst them in a degree of vigour of which no district of Lowland Scotland now presents any example. The parish has six miles of sea-coast; and the village, where the church and school are situated, is in a sheltered situation about a couple of miles inland.

The parish schoolmaster, Hugh Rodger, enjoyed great local fame as a teacher of mensuration and geometry, and was much employed as a practical land-surveyor. On the day when Burns entered at the school, another youth, a little younger than himself, also entered. This was a native of the neighbouring town of Maybole, who, having there completed a course of classical study, was now sent by his father, a respectable shopkeeper, to acquire arithmetic and mensuration under the famed mathematician of Kirkoswald. It was then the custom, when pupils of their age entered at a school, to take the master to a tavern, and sweeten the engagement by treating him to some liquor. Burns and the Maybole youth, accordingly, united to regale Rodger with a potation of ale at a public-house in the village, kept by two gentlewomanly sort of persons named Kennedy—Jean and Anne Kennedy—the former of whom was destined to be afterwards married to immortal verse, under the appellation of *Kirkton Jean*, and whose house, in consideration of some pretensions to birth or style above the common, was always called 'The Ladies' House.' From that time, Burns and the Maybole youth became intimate friends; insomuch that, during this summer, neither had any companion with whom he was more frequently in company than with the other. Burns was only at the village during school-hours; but when his friend Willie returned to the paternal dome on Saturday nights, the poet would accompany him, and stay till it was time for both to come back to school on Monday morning. There was also an interval between the morning and afternoon meetings of the school, which the two youths used to spend together. Instead of amusing themselves with ball or any other sport, like the rest of the scholars, they would take a walk by themselves in the outskirts of the village, and converse on subjects calculated to

[1] 'This business was first carried on here from the Isle of Man, and afterwards to a considerable extent from France, Ostend, and Gottenburg. Persons engaged in it found it necessary to go abroad, and enter into business with foreign merchants; and by dealing in tea, spirits, and silks, brought home to their families and friends the means of luxury and finery at the cheapest rate.'—*Statistical Account of Kirkoswald*, 1794.

improve their minds. By and by they fell upon a plan of holding disputations or arguments on speculative questions, one taking one side, and the other the other, without much regard to their respective opinions on the point, whatever it might be, the whole object being to sharpen their intellects. They asked several of their companions to come and take a side in these debates, but not one would do so; they only laughed at the young philosophers. The matter at length reached the ears of the master, who, however skilled in mathematics, possessed but a narrow understanding and little general knowledge. With all the bigotry of the old school, he conceived that this supererogatory employment of his pupils was a piece of absurdity, and he resolved to correct them in it. One day, therefore, when the school was fully met, and in the midst of its usual business, he went up to the desk where Burns and Willie were sitting opposite to each other, and began to advert in sarcastic terms to what he had heard of them. They had become great debaters, he understood, and conceived themselves fit to settle affairs of importance, which wiser heads usually let alone. He hoped their disputations would not ultimately become quarrels, and that they would never think of coming from words to blows; and so forth. The jokes of schoolmasters always succeed amongst the boys, who are too glad to find the awful man in anything like good-humour, to question either the moral aim or the point of his wit. They therefore, on this occasion, hailed the master's remarks with hearty peals of laughter. Nettled at this, Willie resolved he would 'speak up' to Rodger; but first he asked Burns in a whisper if he would support him, which Burns promised to do. He then said that he was sorry to find that Robert and he had given offence; it had not been intended. And indeed he had expected that the master would have been rather pleased to know of their endeavours to improve their minds. He could assure him that such improvement was the sole object they had in view. Rodger sneered at the idea of their improving their minds by nonsensical discussions, and contemptuously asked what it was they disputed about. Willie replied, that generally there was a new subject every day; that he could not recollect all that had come under their attention; but the question of to-day had been, 'Whether is a great general or a respectable merchant the most valuable member of society?' The dominie laughed outrageously at what he called the silliness of such a question, seeing there could be no doubt for a moment about it. 'Well,' said Burns, 'if you think so, I will be glad if you take any side you please, and

allow me to take the other, and let us discuss it before the school.' Rodger most unwisely assented, and commenced the argument by a flourish in favour of the general. Burns answered by a pointed advocacy of the pretensions of the merchant, and soon had an evident superiority over his preceptor. The latter replied, but without success. His hand was observed to shake; then his voice trembled; and he dissolved the house in a state of vexation pitiable to behold. In this anecdote, who can fail to read a prognostication of future eminence to the two disputants? The one became the most illustrious poet of his country; and it is not unworthy of being mentioned in the same sentence, that the other advanced, through a career of successful industry in his native town, to the possession of a good estate in its neighbourhood, and some share of the honours usually reserved in this country for birth and aristocratic connection.[1]

The coast in the neighbourhood of Burns's residence at Ballochneil presented a range of rustic characters upon whom his genius was destined to confer an extraordinary interest. At the farm of Shanter, on a slope overlooking the shore, not far from Turnberry Castle, lived Douglas Graham, a stout hearty specimen of the Carrick farmer, a little addicted to smuggling, but withal a worthy and upright member of society, and a kind-natured man. He had a wife named Helen M'Taggart, who was unusually subject to superstitious beliefs and fears. The *steading* where this good couple lived is now no more, for the farm has been divided for the increase of two others in its neighbourhood; but genius has given them a perennial existence in the tale of 'Tam o' Shanter,' where their characters are exactly delineated under the respective appellations of Tam and Kate.

At Ballochneil, Burns engaged heartily in the sports of leaping, dancing, wrestling, *putting* (throwing) the stone, and others of the like kind. His innate thirst for distinction and superiority was manifested in these as in more important affairs; but though he was possessed of great strength, as well as skill, he could never match his young bedfellow John Niven. Obliged at last to acknowledge himself beat by this person in bodily warfare, he had recourse for amends to a spiritual mode of contention, and would engage young Niven in an argument about some speculative question, when, of course, he invariably proved victor. His satisfaction on these occasions is said to have been extreme. One

[1] 'Willie' was the late Mr Niven of Kilbride. He died in 1844.

day, as he was walking slowly along the street of the village in a manner customary to him, with his eyes bent on the ground, he was met by the Misses Biggar, the daughters of the parish pastor. He would have passed without noticing them, if one of the young ladies had not called him by name. She then rallied him on his inattention to the fair sex, in preferring to look towards the inanimate ground, instead of seizing the opportunity afforded him of indulging in the most invaluable privilege of man—that of beholding and conversing with the ladies. 'Madam,' said he, 'it is a natural and right thing for man to contemplate the ground, from whence *he* was taken, and for woman to look upon and observe man, from whom *she* was taken.' This was a conceit, but it was the conceit of 'no vulgar boy.'

Burns, according to his own account, concluded his residence at Kirkoswald in a blaze of passion for a fair *fillette* who lived next door to the school. At this time, owing to the destruction of the proper school of Kirkoswald, a chamber at the end of the old church, the business of parochial instruction was conducted in an apartment on the ground-floor of a house in the main street of the village, opposite the church-yard. From behind this house, as from behind each of its neighbours in the same row, a small stripe of kail-yard (*Anglice,* kitchen-garden) runs back about fifty yards, along a rapidly ascending slope. When Burns went into the particular patch behind the school to take the sun's altitude, he had only to look over a low enclosure to see the similar patch connected with the next house. Here, it seems, Peggy Thomson, the daughter of the rustic occupant of that house, was walking at the time, though more probably engaged in the business of cutting a cabbage for the family dinner, than imitating the flower-gathering Proserpine, or her prototype Eve. The sight seems to have been as a stroke of the sun to him, proving fatal to all serious study. He tells us of his writing a song on this rustic maiden; but there is reason to believe that this was not done till some years afterwards, when his acquaintance with her was temporarily renewed.

It is difficult to ascertain from his own statements, even with the aid of his brother's and sister's, the order of such early attempts at rhyme as have been preserved. In arranging them here, I cannot profess to have attained more than an approximation to accuracy. There is one little song, which he says he composed at seventeen; from its style, and from its resemblance both in ideas and expressions to Mrs Cockburn's 'Flowers of the

Forest,' which was published in a collection (*The Lark*) possessed by Burns, it certainly may be ranked as one of his earliest efforts.[1]

I DREAMED I LAY.

I dreamed I lay where flowers were springing
  Gaily in the sunny beam;
Listening to the wild birds singing,
  By a falling, crystal stream:
Straight the sky grew black and daring;
  Through the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms were warring,
  O'er the swelling drumlie wave.

Such was my life's deceitful morning,
  Such the pleasure I enjoyed;
But lang or noon, loud tempests storming, ere
  A' my flowery bliss destroyed.
Though fickle Fortune has deceived me,
  She promised fair, and performed but ill;
Of mony a joy and hope bereaved me,
  I bear a heart shall support me still.

He himself tells us of a truly ambitious design which he had already formed: he had sketched, he says, the outlines of a tragedy, and was only prevented from going on by the bursting of a cloud of family misfortunes. At that time he wrote down nothing, so that nearly the whole escaped his memory. 'The following,' he says, 'was an exclamation from a great character—great in occasional instances of generosity, and daring at times in villainies. He is supposed to meet with a child of misery, and exclaims to himself:—

"All devil as I am, a damned wretch,
  A hardened, stubborn, unrepenting villain,
  Still my heart melts at human wretchedness;
  And with sincere, though unavailing sighs,
  I view the helpless children of distress.

[1] Compare—

Lang or noon loud tempests storming.—*Burns.*
Loud tempests storming before parting day.—*Mrs C.*

Swelling drumlie wave.—*Burns.*
Grow drumlie and dark.—*Mrs C.*

Though fickle Fortune has deceived me.—*Burns.*
O fickle Fortune, why this cruel sporting?—*Mrs C.*

I bear a heart shall support me still.—*Burns.*
Thy frowns cannot fear me, thy smiles cannot cheer me.—*Mrs C.*

With tears indignant I behold the oppressor
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.
Even you, ye helpless crew, I pity you;
Ye whom the seeming good think sin to pity;
Ye poor, despised, abandoned vagabonds,
Whom vice, as usual, has turned o'er to ruin.
—Oh, but for kind, though ill-requited friends,
I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you!"

'The oppressor,' we cannot doubt, was the factor whose lot it was to put poor William Burness to the exigencies of the law for the arrears at Mount Oliphant.

To take up his own narrative at the point where it was formerly dropped, the conclusion of the visit to Carrick:—'I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's works. I had seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly: I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me; and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

'My life flowed on much in the same course till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle,* were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; Sterne and Mackenzie—*Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling*—were my bosom favourites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind, but it was only indulged in according to the humour of the hour. I had usually half-a-dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other, as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except "Winter; a Dirge," the eldest of my printed pieces; "The Death of Poor

Mailie," "John Barleycorn," and songs first, second, and third.[1] Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school business.

'My twenty-third year was to me an important era. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flaxdresser in a neighbouring town (Irvine), to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair. My ***;[2] and, to finish the whole, as we were giving a welcome carousal to the New Year, the shop took fire and burnt to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.

'I was obliged to give up this scheme: the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head; and, what was worst of all, he was visibly far gone in a consumption; and, to crown my distresses, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—*Depart from me, ye accursed!*

'From this adventure I learned something of a town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn, was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, the poor fellow in despair went to sea, where, after a variety of good and ill fortune, a little before I was acquainted with him, he had been set on shore by an American privateer on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of everything. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding that he is at this time master of a large West Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

'His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and of course strove to imitate him. In some measure I succeeded. I had pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper

[1] Those respectively beginning—'It was upon a Lammas-night,' 'Now westlin winds and slaughtering guns,' and 'Behind yon hills where Stinsiar flows.'

[2] From the original letter in the possession of Peter Cunningham, Esq., it appears that the blank here left by Dr Currie was occupied by a charge of a sweeping nature against the probity of his partner.

channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror.[1] Here his friendship did me a mischief; and the consequence was, that soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the "Poet's Welcome." My reading only increased, while in this town, by two stray volumes of *Pamela*, and one of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up; but meeting with Fergusson's Scottish Poems, I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigour. When my father died, his all went among the hell-hounds that prowl in the kennel of Justice; but we made a shift to collect a little money in the family amongst us, with which, to keep us together, my brother and I took a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted my hairbrained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.'

To this rapid sketch of the Lochlea section of his life may be fitly appended the recital of his brother Gilbert for the same period:

'The seven years we lived in Torbolton parish (extending from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth of my brother's age[2]) were not marked by much literary improvement; but during this time the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though, when young, he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he *fainted, sunk, and died away;* but the agitations of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure, to whom he

[1] The individual here alluded to was named Richard Brown. See afterwards, under date February 1788.

[2] In reality, from the nineteenth to the twenty-sixth.

should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great disparity between his fair captivator and her attributes.[1] One generally reigned paramount in his affections; but as Yorick's affections flowed out toward Madame de L—— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many under-plots in the drama of his love. As these connections were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till he reached his twenty-third year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be soon the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while. He began, therefore, to think of trying some other line of life. He and I had for several years taken land of my father for the purpose of raising flax on our own account. In the course of selling it, Robert began to think of turning flaxdresser, both as being suitable to his grand view of settling in life, and as subservient to the flax raising. He, accordingly, wrought at the business of a flax-dresser in Irvine for six months, but abandoned it at that period, as neither agreeing with his health nor inclination. In Irvine he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue which had hitherto restrained him. * * * * During this period also he became a freemason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon-companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems to have misled his historians), I do not recollect, during these seven years, nor till towards the end of his commencing author (when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company), to have ever seen him intoxicated; nor was he at all given to drinking.'

For the first three or four years at Lochlea we have no details of the poet's life. There are very few compositions which can be certainly traced to this period. It was a time of comparative comfort for the Burness family, although marked not less than any other by extreme application to labour. The family was a

[1] This passage is restored from a letter of Gilbert Burns in possession of Joseph Mayer, Esq., Liverpool. The passage substituted by Dr Currie is—'a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator, as she appeared to others, and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her.'

[illegible] kept more [illegible] themselves [illegible] superior intelligence [illegible] self-respect [illegible] their situation [illegible] superior [illegible] family-room [illegible] surprise [illegible] with a book in [illegible] hand [illegible]

[illegible] brother as being [illegible] being that [illegible] winter [illegible] because [illegible] rattling [illegible] witty [illegible] the expressions [illegible] free from the [illegible] contact with the world [illegible] charmed his country [illegible] interesting [illegible] with only two or [illegible]

[illegible] of the family [illegible] with her two [illegible] would delight [illegible] was stored—as [illegible] the Forest, or [illegible] translation. [illegible] studies in English [illegible] themselves, they were [illegible] were venerated [illegible] other kind and [illegible] with all about [illegible] good temper. [illegible] manner particularly [illegible] but Robert took [illegible] who had helped [illegible] young girl, lately [illegible] the reapers on the [illegible] solace and cheer, [illegible] When Gilbert spoke sharply [illegible] would exclaim: "Oh, man, ye are [illegible] he was ready with a helping-hand and

a look of encouragement.'[1] The very cattle and other animals about the farm felt that they met in him with a superior clemency.

The exterior of the young poet had, nevertheless, at first sight, exactly that heavy and repelling character which has been described as belonging to his father. Dr Mackenzie, who attended the family in a medical capacity, is clear upon this point. He says: 'Gilbert, in the first interview I had with him at Lochlea, was frank, modest, well informed, and communicative. The poet seemed distant, suspicious, and without any wish to interest or please. He kept himself very silent in a dark corner of the room; and before he took any part in the conversation, I frequently detected him scrutinising me during my conversation with his father and brother.' Afterwards, 'when the conversation, which was on a medical subject, had taken the turn he wished, he began to engage in it, displaying a dexterity of reasoning, an ingenuity of reflection, and a familiarity with topics apparently beyond his reach, by which his visitor was no less gratified than astonished.'[2]

The love affairs of the Scottish peasantry were, in those days, and in some measure are still, conducted in what appears a singular manner. The young farmer or ploughman, after his day of exhausting toil, would proceed to the home of his mistress, one, two, three, or more miles distant, there signal her to the door, and then the pair would seat themselves in the barn for an hour or two's conversation. It was a primitive fashion, owing its origin probably to the limited domestic accommodations of early times, and fathers and mothers appear to have found no occasion for visiting it with condemnation. In the parish of Torbolton, Robert Burns both launched into this mode of courtship himself, and helped in the similar courtships of others.[3] Gilbert tells us that he was not aspiring in his loves. He made no distinction between the farmer's own daughters and those who acted as his servants—the fact, after all, being, that the servants were often themselves the daughters of farmers, only sent to be the hirelings of others because their services were not needed at home. A surviving companion of the poet in these early days, says that he composed

[1] From a Ramble among the Scenery of Burns in '*The Highland Note-book*, by R. Carruthers, Inverness.'

[2] Walker's *Life of Burns*.

[3] In October 1837, the editor conversed at Torbolton with John Lees, shoemaker, who, when a stripling, used to act as Burns's second in his courting expeditions. The old man spoke with much glee of the aid he had given the poet in the way of *asking out* lasses for him. When he had succeeded in bringing the girl out of doors, he of course became *Monsieur de Trop*, and Burns would say: 'Now, Jock, ye may gang hame.'

a song on almost every tolerable-looking lass in the parish, and finally one in which they were all included. Such ditties must have failed afterwards to satisfy his taste, or he would probably have printed them. There is only one, of a kind truly poetical, which has come down to us:—

MY NANNIE, O.

TUNE—*My Nannie, O.*

Behind yon hills where Stinsiar flows,[1]
  'Mang moors and mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has closed,
  And I 'll awa' to Nannie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud and shill;
  The night 's baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I 'll get my plaid, and out I 'll steal,
  And owre the hills to Nannie, O.

My Nannie 's charming, sweet, and young;
  Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
  That wad beguile my Nannie, O!

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
  As spotless as she 's bonny, O:
The opening gowan, wet wi' dew, — daisy
  Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
  And few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be?
  I 'm welcome aye to Nannie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee, — wages
  And I maun guide it canny, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me, — world's wealth
  My thoughts are a'—my Nannie, O.

Our auld guidman delights to view
  His sheep and kye thrive bonny, O;
But I 'm as blithe that hauds his pleugh,
  And has nae care but Nannie, O.

[1] In subsequent copies, Burns was induced to substitute for the Stinsiar, which has local verity in its favour, the Lugar, a name thought to be more euphonious, but which is otherwise unsuitable.

Come weel, come wo, I care nae by,
  I'll tak what Heaven will send me, O;
Nae ither care in life have I,
  But live and love my Nannie, O.

This charming lyric not merely expresses the perfection of pure and simple love, as presumably felt by a 'country lad,' but verifies the mode of his courtship, as above described. It is a winter evening. The rustic bard, at Lochlea, sees the southerly sun terminating its short course behind the Carrick Hills. Notwithstanding that the night is cold, dark, and rainy, he resolves to steal out, and go over the hill to visit the simple and trusting maiden who for the present reigns in his heart. The song also breathes the purity of the poet's feelings in his earlier days. It is pleasant to know, as we do from Mrs Begg, that his father lived to see this song, and expressed for it his hearty admiration.[1]

Other songs of the period are of a humorous cast, shewing that the course of the poet's loves did not always run quite smooth. It was in the following doughty strain that he addressed a neighbouring maiden,[2] who chose to consider herself as somewhat too good for him:—

TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.

TUNE—*Invercauld's Reel.*

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day
  Ye wad na been sae shy;
For lack o' gear ye lightly me, — slight
  But, trowth, I care na by.

Yestreen I met you on the moor,
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stoure; — dust
Ye geck at me because I'm poor, — mock
  But fient a hair care I.

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink, — money
That ye can please me at a wink,
  Whene'er you like to try.

But sorrow tak him that's sae mean,
Although his pouch o' coin were clean,
Wha follows ony saucy quean, — wench
  That looks sae proud and high.

[1] See Appendix, No. 4.
[2] One named Isabella Steven or Stein.

Although a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye'll cast your head another airt, direction
And answer him fu' dry.

But if he hae the name o' gear, wealth
Ye'll fasten to him like a brier,
Though hardly he, for sense or lear, learning
Be better than the kye.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak my advice,
Your daddie's gear maks you sae nice;
The deil a ane wad speer your price,
Were ye as poor as I.

There lives a lass in yonder park,
I would na gie her in her sark,
For thee, wi' a' thy thousan' mark;
Ye need na look sae high.

The following off-hand verses can scarcely be considered as a song, and they are strikingly inferior to his average efforts; yet, as expressive of a mood of his feelings regarding his fair neighbours in those days of simplicity, they appear not unworthy of preservation:—

THE TORBOLTON LASSES.

If ye gae up to yon hill-tap,
Ye'll there see bonnie Peggy;
She kens her father is a laird,
And she forsooth's a leddy.

There Sophy tight, a lassie bright,
Besides a handsome fortune:
Wha canna win her in a night,
Has little art in courting.

Gae down by Faile, and taste the ale,
And tak a look o' Mysie;
She's dour and din, a deil within, obstinate
But ablins she may please ye. perhaps

If she be shy, her sister try,
Ye'll maybe fancy Jenny,
If ye'll dispense wi' want o' sense—
She kens hersel she's bonnie.

As ye gae up by yon hillside,
  Speer in for bonnie Bessy;
She 'll gie ye a beck, and bid ye light, courtesy
  And handsomely address ye.

There 's few sae bonnie, nane sae guid,
  In a' King George' dominion;
If ye should doubt the truth o' this—
  It 's Bessy's ain opinion!

It is rather remarkable that the young bard overlooks in this catalogue of damsels, a group who were certainly the predominant belles of the district, seeing that they were not merely good-looking girls, rather better educated than the Torbolton sisterhood, but the children of a man of considerable substance. Robert and Gilbert Burns were both on intimate terms in this family. The latter at one time made tender advances, which were not destined to be accepted. Robert was too proud to venture on a refusal. This appears from a set of verses much resembling the last quoted, but more valuable for the illustration they afford of the poet's feelings and circumstances at this early period:—

In Torbolton, ye ken, there are proper young men,
  And proper young lasses and a', man;
But ken ye the Ronalds that live in the Bennals,[1]
  They carry the gree frae them a', man. palm

Their father's a laird, and weel he can spare't,
  Braid money to tocher them a', man, portion
To proper young men, he 'll clink in the hand
  Gowd guineas a hunder or twa, man.

There's ane they ca' Jean, I 'll warrant ye 've seen
  As bonnie a lass or as braw, man;
But for sense and guid taste she 'll vie wi' the best,
  And a conduct that beautifies a', man.

The charms o' the min', the langer they shine,
  The mair admiration they draw, man;
While peaches and cherries, and roses and lilies,
  They fade and they wither awa, man.

If ye be for Miss Jean, tak this frae a frien',
  A hint o' a rival or twa, man,
The Laird o' Blackbyre wad gang through the fire,
  If that wad entice her awa, man.

[1] The Bennals is a farm in the western part of the parish, near Afton Lodge, and several miles from Lochlea.

The Laird o' Braehead has been on his speed,
  For mair than a towmond or twa, man;
The Laird o' the Ford will straught on a board,
  If he canna get her at a', man.

Then Anna comes in, the pride o' her kin,
  The boast of our bachelors a', man:
Sae sonsy and sweet, sae fully complete, comely
  She steals our affections awa, man.

If I should detail the pick and the wale
  O' lasses that live here awa, man,
The fault wad be mine, if they didna shine,
  The sweetest and best o' them a', man.

I lo'e her mysel, but darena weel tell,
  My poverty keeps me in awe, man,
For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
  Does little or naething at a', man.

Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse,
  Nor hae 't in her power to say na, man;
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
  My stomach's as proud as them a', man.

Though I canna ride in weel-booted pride,
  And flee o'er the hills like a craw, man,
I can haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed,
  Though fluttering ever so braw, man.

My coat and my vest, they are Scotch o' the best,
  O' pairs o' guid breeks I hae twa, man,
And stockings and pumps to put on my stumps,
  And ne'er a wrang steek in them a', man.

My sarks they are few, but five o' them new, shirts
  Twal' hundred,[1] as white as the snaw, man,
A ten shillings hat, a Holland cravat;
  There are no mony poets sae braw, man.

I never had frien's, weel stockit in means,
  To leave me a hundred or twa, man;
Nae weel-tochered aunts, to wait on their drants, long prayers
  And wish them in hell for it a', man.

[1] A kind of cloth.

I never was canny for hoarding o' money, . lucky
Or claughtin 't together at a', man, catching
I've little to spend, and naething to lend,
But deevil a shilling I awe, man.

* * * *

Mingled with these moods of tenderness and raillery, there were doubtless others involving deeper emotions. The story of Wallace, as reduced by Hamilton of Gilbertfield from the ancient poem of Blind Harry, had made a great impression on Burns's mind, as it usually does, or did, on those of all young Scotsmen possessed of ardent and generous feelings. He tells us that, in his earlier years, he often stole out after the labours of the day to spend a solitary hour of tearful sympathy over the tale of 'Scotia's ill-requited chief.' One couplet relative to an adventure which took place near his own locality had struck him—

'Syne to the Leglen Wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.'

'I chose,' he says, 'a fine summer Sunday, the only day my life allowed, and walked half-a-dozen miles to pay my respects to the Leglen Wood, with as much enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect—for even then I was a rhymer—that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.' To only a more general purport of the same character is his thrilling verse—

Even then a wish (I mind its power)—
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or beuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least.
The rough, bur-thistle spreading wide
Among the bearded bear,
I turned the weeder-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear!

Dr Currie touches well the higher emotions of the young genius in these days which he himself thought aimless:—'While the ploughshare under his guidance passed through the sward, or the grass fell under the sweep of his scythe, he was humming the songs of his country, musing on the deeds of ancient valour, or

wrapt in the illusions of fancy, as her enchantments rose on his view. Happily, the Sunday is yet a Sabbath on which man and beast rest from their labours. On this day, therefore, Burns could indulge in a free intercourse with the charms of nature. It was his delight to wander alone on the banks of the Ayr, whose stream is now immortal, and to listen to the song of the blackbird at the close of the summer's day. But still greater was his pleasure, as he himself informs us, in walking on the sheltered side of a wood, in a cloudy winter day, and hearing the storm rave among the trees; and more elevated still his delight to ascend some eminence during the agitations of nature; to stride along its summit, while the lightning flashed around him; and amidst the howlings of the tempest, to apostrophise the spirit of the storm. Such situations he declares most favourable to devotion:—"Wrapt in enthusiasm, I seem to ascend towards Him *who walks on the wings of the winds.*"'

Towards the close of 1780, when the poet was completing his twenty-second year, we find a new exhibition of his intellectual activity in the institution of a debating club at Torbolton, the village forming the centre of the parish in which he lived. The following document, afterwards written in the book of the club, gives an account of this laudable association:—

'HISTORY OF THE RISE, PROCEEDINGS, AND REGULATIONS OF THE BACHELORS' CLUB.

"Of birth or blood we do not boast,
Nor gentry does our club afford;
But ploughmen and mechanics we
In Nature's simple dress record."[1]

'As the great end of human society is to become wiser and better, this ought, therefore, to be the principal view of every man, in every station of life. But as experience has taught us that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued, are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind, it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind by some employment or another, that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but at the same time not so serious as to exhaust them. But, superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity *of earning the sustenance of human life by the labour of their bodies*, whereby not only the faculties of mind,

[1] These lines are by David Sillar.—*Professor Walker.* The authorship of the prose which follows may be doubted. Though involving some just observations, it is in a style somewhat clumsy, and therefore not very likely to be the production of Burns.

but the nerves and sinews of the body are so fatigued, that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion to relieve the wearied man, worn down with the necessary labours of life.

'As the best of things, however, have been perverted to the worst of purposes, so, under the pretence of amusement and diversion, men have plunged into all the madness of riot and dissipation; and instead of attending to the grand design of human life, they have begun with extravagance and folly, and ended with guilt and wretchedness. Impressed with these considerations, we, the following lads in the parish of Torbolton—namely, Hugh Reid, Robert Burns, Gilbert Burns, Alexander Brown, Walter Mitchell, Thomas Wright, and William M'Gavin—resolved, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a club, or society, under such rules and regulations that, while we should forget our cares and labours in mirth and diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of innocence and decorum; and after agreeing on these, and some other regulations, we held our first meeting at Torbolton, in the house of John Richard, upon the evening of the 11th November 1780, commonly called Hallowe'en, and after choosing Robert Burns president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question—"Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune—which of them shall he choose?" Finding ourselves very happy in our society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month in the same house, in the way and manner proposed; and shortly thereafter we chose Robert Ritchie for another member. In May 1781, we brought in David Sillar, and in June, Adam Jamieson, as members. About the beginning of the year 1782, we admitted Matthew Paterson and John Orr; and in June following, we chose James Paterson as a proper brother for such a society. The club being thus increased, we resolved to meet at Torbolton on the race-night, the July following, and have a dance in honour of our society. Accordingly, we did meet each one with a partner, and spent the evening in such innocence and merriment, such cheerfulness and good-humour, that every brother will long remember it with pleasure and delight.'

The rules of this club excluded only religious subjects. The last, being the tenth, appears characteristic of Burns:—

'Every man proper for a member of this society must have a frank, honest, open heart; above anything dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex.

No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the club, and especially no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall upon any pretence whatever be admitted. In short, the proper person for this society is a cheerful, honest-hearted lad, who if he has a friend that is true, and a mistress that is kind, and as much wealth as genteelly to make both ends meet, is just as happy as this world can make him.'

Dr Currie found in Burns's papers some detached memoranda, shewing that he took some care to prepare himself for the debates. Amongst others, were the heads of a speech on the *imprudent* side in the question for the opening night. The following may serve as a further specimen of the questions debated in the society at Torbolton:—'Whether do we derive more happiness from love or friendship?' 'Whether between friends, who have no reason to doubt each other's friendship, there should be any reserve?' 'Whether is the savage man or the peasant of a civilised country, in the most happy situation?' 'Whether is a young man of the lower ranks of life likeliest to be happy who has got a good education, and his mind well informed, or he who has just the education and information of those around him?'

The name of David Sillar is mentioned in the history of the club as a new entrant in May 1781. He was a young man of education somewhat above his rustic compeers, and of a verse-making tendency. Burns and he formed an intimate friendship, which lasted with great intensity as long as the former remained in the parish. An account by Mr Sillar of the forming of this intimacy gives us perhaps the best description of Burns in these youthful obscure days that we have. He says: 'Mr Robert Burns was some time in the parish of Torbolton prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning, with which he and all poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced [?], while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied by its kindred attendant—suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his principles [meaning, we presume, his orthodoxy]. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particular colour, I think fillemot, he wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders. These surmises, and his exterior, had such a magical influence on my curiosity, as made me particularly solicitous of his acquaintance. Whether my

acquaintance with Gilbert was casual or premeditated, I am not now certain. By him I was introduced not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where in a short time I became a frequent, and, I believe, not unwelcome visitant. After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard, we frequently met upon Sundays at church, when, between sermons [services], instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks I have frequently been struck by his facility in addressing the fair sex; and many times, when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them with the greatest ease and freedom: and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance. Some of the few opportunities of a noontide walk that a country-life allows her laborious sons he spent on the banks of the river, or in the woods in the neighbourhood of Stair, a situation peculiarly adapted to the genius of a rural bard. Some book (especially one of those mentioned in his letter to Mr Murdoch) he always carried, and read when not otherwise employed. It was likewise his custom to read at table. In one of my visits to Lochlea, in time of a sowen[1] supper, he was so intent on reading, I think *Tristram Shandy*, that his spoon falling out of his hand made him exclaim, in a tone scarcely imitable, "Alas, poor Yorick!" Such was Burns, and such were his associates, when, in May 1781, I was admitted a member of the Bachelors' Club.'[2]

The proceedings of the club suggest that Burns, when only advancing to the close of his twenty-second year, had turned his thoughts to matrimony, for there can be little doubt that the first question was of his propounding. It does appear that about this time he had met a young woman possessing many highly agreeable qualities, though 'without any fortune,' on whose hand he had serious views. Her name was Ellison Begbie, the daughter of a small farmer in the parish of Galston: she was now a servant with a family on the banks of the Cessnock, about two miles from the home of the Burnesses. Ellison was not at all a beauty, but yet there was a fascination about her that made her much run after by the young men of the neighbourhood. Her charms lay in the life and grace of the mind; in this respect she was so much superior to ordinary girls of her station, that Burns, in maturer

[1] Sowens, a mess composed of the farina gathered by steeping the husks of grain.

[2] Letter to Mr Aiken of Ayr, in Morison's edition of Burns.

years, after he had seen Edinburgh ladies, acknowledged to his family that she was, of all the women he had ever seriously addressed, the one most likely to have formed an agreeable companion for life. On her he composed what he called a song of similes—a curious conceit in versification, but yet containing many exquisite lines:—

ON CESSNOCK BANKS.[1]

TUNE—*If he be a Butcher neat and trim.*

On Cessnock Banks there lives a lass;
  Could I describe her shape and mien,
The graces of her weel-faured face, well-favoured
  And the glancing of her sparkling een!

She's fresher than the morning dawn
  When rising Phœbus first is seen,
When dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;
  And she's twa glancing sparkling een.

She's stately like yon youthful ash,
  That grows the cowslip braes between,
And shoots its head above each bush;
  And she's twa glancing sparkling een.

She's spotless as the flowering thorn,
  With flowers so white and leaves so green,
When purest in the dewy morn;
  And she's twa glancing sparkling een.

Her looks are like the sportive lamb,
  When flowery May adorns the scene,
That wantons round its bleating dam;
  And she's twa glancing sparkling een.

Her hair is like the curling mist
  That shades the mountain-side at e'en,
When flower-reviving rains are past;
  And she's twa glancing sparkling een.

[1] This piece appeared for the first time in Cromek's *Reliques*, the editor stating that he had recovered it 'from the oral communication of a lady residing at Glasgow, whom the bard in early life affectionately admired.' It seems not unlikely that Ellison herself had grown into this lady. A copy printed from the poet's manuscript in Pickering's edition of his works is considerably different in one stanza, presents an additional one, and exhibits a different concluding line to each verse—

'An' she's twa sparkling roguish een.'

Her forehead 's like the showery bow,
  When shining sunbeams intervene,
And gild the distant mountain's brow;
  And she 's twa glancing sparkling een.

Her voice is like the evening thrush
  That sings in Cessnock Banks unseen,
While his mate sits nestling in the bush;
  And she 's twa glancing sparkling een.

Her lips are like the cherries ripe
  That sunny walls from Boreas screen—
They tempt the taste and charm the sight;
  And she 's twa glancing sparkling een.

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
  With fleeces newly washen clean,
That slowly mount the rising steep;
  And she 's twa glancing sparkling een.[1]

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze
  That gently stirs the blossomed bean,
When Phœbus sinks beneath the seas;
  And she 's twa glancing sparkling een.

[Her cheeks are like yon crimson gem,
  The pride of all the flowery scene,
Just opening on its thorny stem;
  And she 's twa sparkling roguish een.] [2]

But it 's not her air, her form, her face,
  Though matching beauty's fabled queen,
But the mind that shines in every grace,
  And chiefly in her sparkling een.

Mrs Begg remembers that her brother went frequently in the evening to pay his addresses to this damsel of the Cessnock, and, as he did not usually return till a late hour, his father at length took an alarm at the irregularity of his habits. The old man resolved to administer to his son the practical rebuke of sitting up to let him in, and also to give him a few words of gentle admonition.

[1] Variation in Pickering's copy:

Her teeth are like the nightly snow,
  While pale the morning rises keen,
While hid the murmuring streamlets flow;
  And she 's twa sparkling roguish een.

[2] The above is the additional stanza in Pickering's edition.

When Robert returned that night, the father was there to administer the intended correction; but the young bard defeated his plan. On being asked what had detained him so long, he began a whimsical narration of what he had met with and seen of natural and supernatural on his way home, concluding with the particulars afterwards wrought up in the well-known verses in his 'Address to the Deil'—

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin' light,
Wi' you mysel I got a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye like a rash bush stood in sight,
Wi' waving sough.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristled hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldrich, stoor quaick—quaick—
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squattered like a drake,
On whistling wings!

The old man was, in spite of himself, so much interested and amused by this recital, as to forget the intended scolding, and the affair ended in his sitting up for an hour or two by the kitchen fire enjoying the conversation of his gifted son.

The earliest specimens of Burns's prose composition which we possess, are a series of letters to Ellison Begbie, most of them probably written in the winter of 1780–1—slightly pedantic in manner, as might be expected of a young genius still walking by the light of a vade-mecum of epistolary correspondence, and striving to educate his mind in a debating-club, yet wonderful as emanating from a youth in such a situation, and as addressed to a rustic serving-girl:[1]—

TO ELLISON BEGBIE.

I verily believe, my dear E., that the pure genuine feelings of love are as rare in the world as the pure genuine principles of virtue and piety. This, I hope, will account for the uncommon style of all my letters to you. By uncommon, I mean their being written in such a hasty manner, which, to tell you the truth, has made me often afraid lest you should take me for some zealous

[1] Dr Currie printed this series of four letters in his first edition of the poet's works, as 'written about the year 1780.' They were withdrawn from subsequent editions, for what reason does not appear. Allan Cunningham included them in his edition, with the conjectural date 1788, which is too far onward.

bigot, who conversed with his mistress as he would converse with his minister. I don't know how it is, my dear, for though, except your company, there is nothing in earth gives me so much pleasure as writing to you, yet it never gives me those giddy raptures so much talked of among lovers. I have often thought that if a well-grounded affection be not really a part of virtue, 'tis something extremely akin to it. Whenever the thought of my E. warms my heart, every feeling of humanity, every principle of generosity, kindles in my breast, it extinguishes every dirty spark of malice and envy which are but too apt to infest me. I grasp every creature in the arms of universal benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and sympathise with the miseries of the unfortunate. I assure you, my dear, I often look up to the Divine Disposer of events with an eye of gratitude for the blessing which I hope he intends to bestow on me in bestowing you. I sincerely wish that he may bless my endeavours to make your life as comfortable and happy as possible, both in sweetening the rougher parts of my natural temper, and bettering the unkindly circumstances of my fortune. This, my dear, is a passion, at least in my view, worthy of a man, and, I will add, worthy of a Christian. The sordid earthworm may profess love to a woman's person, whilst in reality his affection is centered in her pocket; and the slavish drudge may go a-wooing as he goes to the horse-market, to choose one who is stout and firm, and, as we may say of an old horse, one who will be a good drudge, and draw kindly. I disdain their dirty, puny ideas. I would be heartily out of humour with myself if I thought I were capable of having so poor a notion of the sex, which were designed to crown the pleasures of society. Poor devils! I don't envy them their happiness who have such notions. For my part, I propose quite other pleasures with my dear partner.

R. B.

TO THE SAME.

My Dear E.—I do not remember, in the course of your acquaintance and mine, ever to have heard your opinion on the ordinary way of falling in love amongst people of our station in life. I do not mean the persons who proceed in the way of bargain, but those whose affection is really placed on the person.

Though I be, as you know very well, but a very awkward lover myself, yet as I have some opportunities of observing the conduct of others who are much better skilled in the affair of courtship than I am, I often think it is owing to lucky chance more than to good management that there are not more unhappy marriages than usually are.

It is natural for a young fellow to like the acquaintance of the females, and customary for him to keep them company when occasion serves: some one of them is more agreeable to him than the rest—there is something, he knows not what, pleases him, he knows

not how, in her company. This I take to be what is called love with the greater part of us; and I must own, my dear E., it is a hard game such a one as you have to play when you meet with such a lover. You cannot refuse but he is sincere, and yet though you use him ever so favourably, perhaps in a few months, or at furthest in a year or two, the same unaccountable fancy may make him as distractedly fond of another, whilst you are quite forgot. I am aware that perhaps the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you, you may bid me take my own lesson home, and tell me that the passion I have professed for you is perhaps one of those transient flashes I have been describing; but I hope, my dear E., you will do me the justice to believe me, when I assure you that the love I have for you is founded on the sacred principles of virtue and honour, and by consequence so long as you continue possessed of those amiable qualities which first inspired my passion for you, so long must I continue to love you. Believe me, my dear, it is love like this alone which can render the marriage state happy. People may talk of flames and raptures as long as they please—and a warm fancy, with a flow of youthful spirits, may make them feel something like what they describe; but sure I am, the nobler faculties of the mind, with kindred feelings of the heart, can only be the foundation of friendship, and it has always been my opinion that the married life was only friendship in a more exalted degree. If you will be so good as to grant my wishes, and it should please Providence to spare us to the latest period of life, I can look forward and see that even then, though bent down with wrinkled age—even then, when all other worldly circumstances will be indifferent to me, I will regard my E. with the tenderest affection; and for this plain reason—because she is still possessed of those noble qualities, improved to a much higher degree, which first inspired my affection for her.

> 'Oh happy state, when souls each other draw,
> When love is liberty, and nature law!'

I know were I to speak in such a style to many a girl, who thinks herself possessed of no small share of sense, she would think it ridiculous; but the language of the heart is, my dear E., the only courtship I shall ever use to you.

When I look over what I have written, I am sensible it is vastly different from the ordinary style of courtship, but I shall make no apology—I know your good-nature will excuse what your good sense may see amiss. R. B.

TO THE SAME.

I have often thought it a peculiarly unlucky circumstance in love, that, though in every other situation in life telling the truth is not only the safest, but actually by far the easiest way of proceeding, a lover is never under greater difficulty in acting, or

more puzzled for expression, than when his passion is sincere, and his intentions are honourable. I do not think that it is very difficult for a person of ordinary capacity to talk of love and fondness which are not felt, and to make vows of constancy and fidelity which are never intended to be performed, if he be villain enough to practise such detestable conduct; but to a man whose heart glows with the principles of integrity and truth, and who sincerely loves a woman of amiable person, uncommon refinement of sentiment, and purity of manners—to such a one, in such circumstances, I can assure you, my dear, from my own feelings at this present moment, courtship is a task indeed. There is such a number of foreboding fears and distrustful anxieties crowd into my mind when I am in your company, or when I sit down to write to you, that what to speak or what to write I am altogether at a loss.

There is one rule which I have hitherto practised, and which I shall invariably keep with you, and that is, honestly to tell you the plain truth. There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am surprised they can be acted by any one in so noble, so generous a passion, as virtuous love. No, my dear E., I shall never endeavour to gain your favour by such detestable practices. If you will be so good and so generous as to admit me for your partner, your companion, your bosom-friend through life, there is nothing on this side of eternity shall give me greater transport; but I shall never think of purchasing your hand by any arts unworthy of a man, and I will add, of a Christian. There is one thing, my dear, which I earnestly request of you, and it is this—that you would soon either put an end to my hopes by a peremptory refusal, or cure me of my fears by a generous consent.

It would oblige me much if you would send me a line or two when convenient. I shall only add further, that if a behaviour regulated (though perhaps but very imperfectly) by the rules of honour and virtue, if a heart devoted to love and esteem you, and an earnest endeavour to promote your happiness—if these are qualities you would wish in a friend, in a husband, I hope you shall ever find them in your real friend and sincere lover, R. B.

The removal of the poet to Irvine to learn flaxdressing took place at midsummer 1781. He says he took this step partly through whim, and partly because he wished to set about doing something in life. Gilbert is more explicit, and tells us that Robert, being anxious to be in a situation to marry, thought of turning flaxdresser, both as being suitable 'to his grand view of settling in life,' and as being subservient to the venture which the two brothers had made in raising flax upon their father's farm. So far as his union with Ellison Begbie was in view, the plan was

nugatory, for it appears to have been just before his removal to Irvine that he had occasion to write the following letter to that young woman:—

TO ELLISON BEGBIE.

I ought, in good-manners, to have acknowledged the receipt of your letter before this time, but my heart was so shocked with the contents of it, that I can scarcely yet collect my thoughts so as to write you on the subject. I will not attempt to describe what I felt on receiving your letter. I read it over and over, again and again, and though it was in the politest language of refusal, still it was peremptory: 'you were sorry you could not make me a return, but you wish me'—what, without you, I never can obtain—'you wish me all kind of happiness.' It would be weak and unmanly to say that without you I never can be happy; but sure I am, that sharing life with you would have given it a relish, that, wanting you, I can never taste.

Your uncommon personal advantages, and your superior good sense, do not so much strike me; these, possibly, may be met with in a few instances in others; but that amiable goodness, that tender feminine softness, that endearing sweetness of disposition, with all the charming offspring of a warm feeling heart—these I never again expect to meet with, in such a degree, in this world. All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond anything I have ever met in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not think the world can ever efface. My imagination has fondly flattered myself with a wish, I dare not say it ever reached a hope, that possibly I might one day call you mine. I had formed the most delightful images, and my fancy fondly brooded over them; but now I am wretched for the loss of what I really had no right to expect. I must now think no more of you as a mistress; still I presume to ask to be admitted as a friend. As such I wish to be allowed to wait on you; and as I expect to remove in a few days a little further off, and you, I suppose, will soon leave this place, I wish to see or hear from you soon; and if an expression should perhaps escape me rather too warm for friendship, I hope you will pardon it in, my dear Miss—(pardon me the dear expression for once) * * * * R. B.

How it happened that Ellison saw fit to refuse the poet's hand, does not appear.

He, nevertheless, commenced his enterprise, though it is to be feared in a depressed state of spirits. Irvine, a little seaport on the Firth of Clyde, then contained many small flax-dressing concerns, in connection with farms which were mainly, or in great part, devoted to the raising of the material. Amongst

these was one conducted by a person named Peacock. Here Robert fixed himself to acquire the skill of a craft by no means agreeable. The trade was carried on in one end of a small cottage, of which the other end was employed by a different person in keeping two or three work-horses. There is little remembered of the great poet in Irvine. Persons of importance could know nothing of an obscure country-lad working at a stifling trade in a cottage in the Smiddy-bar. Those who came in contact with him were chiefly of a kind to be little impressed by his rising talents. Yet he did not pass quite unnoticed. I conversed in 1826 with a person who had been often in his company while he lived in Irvine. What had been remarked in him was his melancholy. Amongst ordinary people he would sit for a considerable time with his head resting on his hand, and his elbow resting on his knee; it was only when the company was joined by some man of superior intelligence, or by a female, that the young poet brightened up. His powers of argument were thought extraordinary. As has been seen, he formed an acquaintance in Irvine with a young sailor named Richard Brown, who talked of women in a manner which, according to his own account, sapped his hitherto virtuous principles. This youth, however, had sense to appreciate the budding genius of his friend. Burns himself, when he had attained distinction, thus wrote to Brown, recalling those Irvine days: 'Do you recollect a Sunday we spent together in Eglinton woods? You told me, on my repeating some verses to you, that you wondered I could resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine. It was from this remark I derived the idea of my own pieces, which encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet.'[1] In Irvine, Burns met another person, who, many years after, spoke complacently to Professor Walker of having led him to take more liberal views than he had been accustomed to of religious questions. These were important points in his moral history, arising out of his residence in Irvine.

Towards the close of the year, we find him suffering from a severe nervous affection, accompanied by extreme hypochondria, under which he wrote the following letter to his father:—

IRVINE, *December* 27, 1781.

HONOURED SIR—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's Day;

[1] See letter of date December 30, 1787, onward.

but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder; and, on the whole, I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past events nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life, for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

> 'The soul, uneasy and confined at home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come.'

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer.[1] As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me: I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them; but which, I hope, have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr and Mrs Muir; and with wishing you a merry New-year's Day, I shall conclude. I am, honoured sir, your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNS.

P.S.—My meal is nearly out;[2] but I am going to borrow, till I get more.

[1] The verses of Scripture here alluded to are as follow:—

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

[2] It is no uncommon case for a small farmer, or even cotter, in Scotland to have a son

It was probably at this time also—a time which he says he could not afterwards recall without a shudder—that he composed a series of poems expressive of deep suffering, including his 'Winter, a Dirge,' which he spoke of as the eldest of the pieces in his Edinburgh edition :—

WINTER, A DIRGE.

The wintry west extends his blast,
  And hail and rain does blaw;
Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
  The blinding sleet and snaw:
While, tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
  And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
  And pass the heartless day.

'The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,'[1]
  The joyless winter day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
  Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
  My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
  Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
  These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
  Because they are Thy will!
Then all I want (oh, do Thou grant
  This one request of mine!)
Since to enjoy Thou dost deny,
  Assist me to resign.

placed at some distant seminary of learning, or serving an apprenticeship to some metropolitan writer or tradesman; in which case the youth is almost invariably supplied with oatmeal, the staple of the poor Scotsman's life—cheese, perhaps—oaten or barley bread, &c., from the home stores, by the intervention of the weekly or fortnightly carrier. The above passage recalls an anecdote which is related of a gentleman, afterwards high in consideration at the Scottish bar, whose father, a poor villager in the upper ward of Lanarkshire, having contrived to get him placed at Glasgow university, supported him there chiefly by a weekly bag of oatmeal. On one occasion the supply was stopped for nearly three weeks by a snow-storm. The young man's meal, like Burns's, was out; but his pride, or his having no intimate acquaintance, prevented him from borrowing. And this remarkable and powerful-minded man had all but perished before the dissolving snow allowed a new stock of provisions to reach him.

[1] Dr Young.

In the same spirit, and indeed expressive of the same idea, is

A PRAYER,

WRITTEN UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

Oh Thou great Being! what Thou art
  Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee
  Are all Thy works below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
  All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
  Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
  From cruelty or wrath!
Oh free my weary eyes from tears,
  Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
  To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves,
  To bear, and not repine!

After the feelings so pathetically expressed on the 27th of December, it certainly requires some consideration on the irregularity and fitfulness of all human emotions, to enable us to learn without surprise that on the 1st of January the poet was engaged in a merry-making of such a character, that the flaxdressing establishment became a prey to the flames. It might be supposed from his own narrative that he immediately deserted the business and Irvine together; but his sister reports that he did not return to Lochlea till the ensuing March. Of this there is some evidence under his own hand, for in the little garret-room which he occupied, the stone chimney-piece still bears his initials, believed to have been inscribed by himself, together with the date 1782.

He tells us that about this time he had hung his harp upon the willows. Shortly, however, after his return to Lochlea and the plough, he took it down from those melancholy boughs, and strung it anew. Its strains were not as yet of witching excellence; but one is of value, as expressive of the poet's present position and prospects in life.

MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.

Tune—The Weaver and his Shuttle, O.

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O,
And carefully he bred me in decency and order, O;
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a farthing, O;
For without an honest manly heart no man was worth regarding, O.

Then out into the world my course I did determine, O;
Though to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was charming, O:
My talents they were not the worst, nor yet my education, O;
Resolved was I, at least to try, to mend my situation, O.

In many a way, and vain essay, I courted fortune's favour, O;
Some cause unseen still stept between, to frustrate each endeavour, O.
Sometimes by foes I was o'erpowered, sometimes by friends forsaken, O;
And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst mistaken, O.

Then sore harassed, and tired at last, with fortune's vain delusion, O,
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this conclusion, O—
The past was bad, and the future hid—its good or ill untried, O;
But the present hour was in my power, and so I would enjoy it, O.

No help, nor hope, nor view had I, nor person to befriend me, O;
So I must toil, and sweat, and broil, and labour to sustain me, O;
To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me early, O;
For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for fortune fairly, O.

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor, through life I'm doomed to wander, O,
Till down my weary bones I lay, in everlasting slumber, O.
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain or sorrow, O!
I live to-day as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow, O.

But cheerful still I am as well as a monarch in a palace, O,
Though fortune's frown still hunts me down with all her wonted malice, O:
I make indeed my daily bread, but ne'er can make it further, O;
But as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard her, O.

When sometimes by my labour I earn a little money, O,
Some unforeseen misfortune comes generally upon me, O:
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my good-natured folly, O:
But come what will, I've sworn it still, I'll ne'er be melancholy, O.

All you who follow wealth and power with unremitting ardour, O,
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view the further, O:
Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore you, O,
A cheerful honest-hearted clown I will prefer before you, O.

We find him writing in a similar strain, but with a larger infusion of world-defying self-esteem, in a letter to his quondam preceptor, Murdoch:—

TO MR JOHN MURDOCH, SCHOOLMASTER, STAPLES' INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

LOCHLEA, *15th January* 1783.

DEAR SIR—As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father and a masterly teacher, and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits, and in this respect I hope my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow; but to tell you the truth, sir, there is hardly anything more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world to see and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be anything original about him, which shews me human nature in a different light from anything I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to 'study men, their manners, and their ways;' and for this darling subject I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to anything further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched,[1] does not much terrify me: I know that my talent for what country folks call a sensible crack,[2] when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then I would learn to be happy. However, I am under no apprehensions about that; for though indolent, yet so far as an extremely delicate

[1] Vagrant mendicancy. [2] A rational chat.

constitution permits, I am not lazy, and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist—not, indeed, for the sake of the money, but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach; and I scorn to fear the face of any man living—above everything, I abhor as hell the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, whom in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind—such as Shenstone, particularly his *Elegies;* Thomson; *Man of Feeling*[1]—a book I prize next to the Bible; *Man of the World;* Sterne, especially his *Sentimental Journey;* Macpherson's *Ossian,* &c.; these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct, and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd, to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race—he 'who can soar above this little scene of things'—can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves? Oh how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor, insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and 'catching the manners living as they rise,' whilst the men of business jostle me on every side as an idle encumbrance in their way. But I daresay I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere common-place story, but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare—and accept of the same for yourself, from, dear sir, yours, R. B.

Burns had formed the acquaintance of David Sillar, as we have seen, in the earlier part of 1781. Their friendship was of the most ardent kind. One can imagine the two russet-dressed lads taking their walks together, full of intimate, endlessly delightful conversation about their sweethearts, and about lasses in general, or, mayhap, at soberer moments, debating about the business for next club-night. Of the merry dancing-party which met on the July race-night in 1782, 'in honour of the society,' Mrs Begg is (1854) a survivor. She relates that Robert attended a dancing-school when at Lochlea, and she believes it was some time after the Kirkoswald visit, for a young cousin of theirs, Janet Brown, the daughter of the poet's entertainer there, was then residing with them, by way of completing the interchange of civilities. There could not well be any great objection on his father's part

[1] Of this work he used to say that he had worn out two copies by carrying it in his pocket. —*Anonymous Life of Burns, Scots Magazine,* 1797.

to his acquiring this accomplishment, for Gilbert and the two eldest sisters, Agnes and Annabella, besides their ploughman, Willie Miller, all attended likewise. As a collateral circumstance not essential to the narrative, but characteristic—On a practising-ball occurring, Burns paid Willie's expenses, that he might have Janet Brown as a partner, so as to enable the bard to have as *his* partner some other lass who was then reigning in his affections. By and by, the Torbolton Club ball came on, a much more important affair; and, according to the record of the society, it went off most successfully. An accident led to Mrs Begg being present. Then a girl of eleven, attending the sewing-school at Torbolton, she was going home to Lochlea, when her sister Annie met her, and took her back to be a partner to Matthew Paterson, a member of the club, who had somehow lost his sweetheart, and was in despair on that account. In these little matters we get glimpses of the love-policies, the fears, the hopes, the triumphs, and the disasters, amidst which Burns describes himself as living at this period.

In imitation of Davie, who was a keen votary of the fiddle, Burns began, so early as 1781, to try to learn that instrument. When driven from the field by bad weather, he would while away a heavy hour in this way. Occasionally, too, he rose early in the morning, broke up the kitchen gathering-coal, and commenced practising; but this excited such discomposure in the family, as to render his fiddling anything but popular. He certainly never attained any proficiency either in this art or that of playing the German flute, which he subsequently attempted. It is amusing, nevertheless, to learn that he always kept up the idea that he was a kind of musician; and in a manuscript of his 'Epistle to Davie,' entitles him a brother fiddler, as well as brother poet. To despatch his musical accomplishments at once—he possessed a good ear, and much sensibility to sweet sounds, and could read printed airs with tolerable readiness, as well as write down an air in score. His voice, however, being essentially unmusical, he never could sing solo with any effect, and he always avoided displays of that kind.

The general life of Burns after his return from Irvine was as laborious as before. We have the authority of his brother Gilbert that it was frugal and temperate. Though social in his disposition, he never exceeded in his potations, and his personal expenses were not above seven pounds annually. We have scarcely any dates for his life or compositions throughout 1782; but it is

certain that during this period he composed both poems and songs. One of the poems took its rise in a simple incident related by his brother Gilbert. 'He had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlea. He and I were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us, at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking, awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with Hughoc's appearance and posture on the occasion. Poor Mailie was set to rights; and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her Death and Dying Words pretty much in the way they now stand:'—

THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE, THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE:

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

As Mailie and her lambs thegither,
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch, — foot—loop
And owre she warsled in the ditch: — struggled
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoc[1] he cam doytin' by. — walking stupidly

Wi' glowering een and lifted hands, — staring
Poor Hughoc like a statue stands;
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But, waes my heart! he could na mend it.
He gapèd wide, but naething spak—
At length poor Mailie silence brak.

'Oh thou, whose lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My dying words attentive hear,
And bear them to my master dear.

'Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep, — money
Oh, bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!

[1] A neighbour herd-callan. B.—In a copy of the poem in the poet's handwriting, possessed by Miss Grace Aiken, Ayr, a more descriptive note is here given: 'Hughoc was an odd, glowran, gapin' callan, about three-fourths as wise as other folk.'

But ca' them out to park or hill,
And let them wander at their will;
So may his flock increase, and grow
To scores o' lambs, and packs o' woo'.

'Tell him he was a master kin',
And aye was guid to me and mine;
And now my dying charge I gie him—
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.

'Oh, bid him save their harmless lives
Frae dogs, and tods, and butchers' knives! foxes
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel; provide for
And tent them duly, e'en and morn,
Wi' teats o' hay, and ripps o' corn. handfuls

'And may they never learn the gaets ways
Of other vile, wanrestfu' pets; restless
To slink through slaps, and reave and steal
At stacks o' peas, or stocks o' kail.
So may they, like their great forbears, ancestors
For mony a year come through the shears:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
And bairns greet for them when they 're dead.

'My poor toop-lamb, my son and heir,
Oh, bid him breed him up wi' care;
And if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast! manners

'And warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame;
And no to rin and wear his cloots,
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes. senseless

'And neist my yowie, silly thing,
Gude keep thee frae a tether string;
Oh, may thou ne'er forgather up encounter
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop,
But aye keep mind to moop and mell mump—associate
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel.

'And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath
I lea'e my blessin' wi' you baith:
And when you think upo' your mither,
Mind to be kin' to ane anither.

'Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail
To tell my master a' my tale;
And bid him burn his cursed tether,
And, for thy pains, thou's get my blether.'

This said, poor Mailie turned her head,
And closed her een amang the dead.

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose;
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead;
The last sad cape-stane of his woes—
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear
The mourning weed:
He's lost a friend and neibor dear,
In Mailie dead.

Through a' the toun she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
And could behave hersel wi' mense: discretion
I'll say't she never brak a fence,
Through thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence inner room
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe, valley
Her living image in her yowe,
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe, hillock
For bits o' bread;
And down the briny pearls rowe
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips, rams
Wi' tawted ket, and hairy hips, matted fleece
For her forbears were brought in ships
Frae yont the Tweed:
A bonnier fleesh ne'er crossed the clips
Than Mailie dead.[1]

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—a rape!
It makes guid fellows girn and gape,
Wi' chokin' dread;
And Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,
For Mailie dead.

Oh a' ye bards on bonnie Doon!
And wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon moan
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon—
His Mailie 's dead!

There is a homely humour in these pieces; but the hand of the bard had not yet acquired the full measure of its power or cunning. They are amongst the few pieces which the author's father was destined to see, and it is scarcely necessary to say that he admired the ability which they proved his son to possess.

To the same period may be ascribed some of his songs—as the following:—

JOHN BARLEYCORN—A BALLAD.[2]

There were three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high;
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and ploughed him down,
Put clods upon his head;
And they hae sworn a solemn oath,
John Barleycorn was dead.

[1] Variation in original MS.:—

She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo like goats, and legs like trams;
She was the flower o' Fairly lambs,
A famous breed;
Now Robin, greetin', chews the hams
O' Mailie dead.

[2] This is an improvement upon an early song of probably English origin, of which Mr Robert Jameson has given a copy in his *Ballads* (2 vols. 8vo), which he obtained from a black-letter sheet in the Pepys Library, Cambridge.

But the cheerful spring came kindly on,
  And showers began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
  And sore surprised them all.

The sultry suns of summer came,
  And he grew thick and strong;
His head weel armed wi' pointed spears,
  That no one should him wrong.

The sober autumn entered mild,
  When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
  Shewed he began to fail.

His colour sickened more and more,
  He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
  To shew their deadly rage.

They 've taen a weapon, long and sharp,
  And cut him by the knee;
Then tied him fast upon a cart,
  Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
  And cudgelled him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
  And turned him o'er and o'er.

They fillèd up a darksome pit,
  With water to the brim;
They heavèd in John Barleycorn,
  There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor
  To work him further wo;
And still, as signs of life appeared,
  They tossed him to and fro.

They wasted o'er a scorching flame
  The marrow of his bones;
But a miller used him worst of all,
  For he crushed him 'tween two stones.

And they hae taen his very heart's blood,
  And drunk it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
  Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
  Of noble enterprise;
For if you do but taste his blood,
  'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his wo;
  'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
  Though the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
  Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
  Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

The year 1783, and the early part of 1784, witnessed various love affairs of the poet, of which we have but an obscure account. One of these is solely indicated in the beautiful song of

MARY MORRISON.[1]

Oh, Mary, at thy window be,
  It is the wished, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
  That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blithely wad I bide the stoure,
  A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure,
  The lovely Mary Morrison.

Yestreen when to the trembling string,
  The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
  I sat, but neither heard nor saw.
Though this was fair, and that was braw,
  And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sighed, and said amang them a':
  'Ye are na Mary Morrison.'

Oh, Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
  Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
  Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
  At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
  The thought o' Mary Morrison.

[1] 'Of all the productions of Burns, the pathetic and serious love-songs which he has left behind him in the manner of old ballads, are perhaps those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to Mary Morrison, &c.'—HAZLITT.

Another finds record in a more luxurious strain:—

THE RIGS O' BARLEY.

TUNE—*Corn Rigs.*

It was upon a Lammas night,
  When corn rigs are bonnie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
  I held awa to Annie:
The time flew by wi' tentless heed,
  Till 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed
  To see me through the barley.

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
  The moon was shining clearly;
I set her down wi' right good will
  Amang the rigs o' barley;
I ken't her heart was a' my ain;
  I loved her most sincerely;
I kissed her owre and owre again
  Amang the rigs o' barley.

I locked her in my fond embrace;
  Her heart was beating rarely:
My blessings on that happy place,
  Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
  That shone that hour so clearly!
She aye shall bless that happy night,
  Amang the rigs o' barley.

I hae been blithe wi' comrades dear;
  I hae been merry drinkin';
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin' gear;
  I hae been happy thinkin':
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
  Though three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
  Amang the rigs o' barley.

CHORUS.

Corn rigs, and barley rigs,
  And corn rigs are bonnie:
I 'll ne'er forget that happy night
  Amang the rigs wi' Annie.

A friend of the late Mrs Anne Mirry, youngest daughter of a friend of Burns afterwards alluded to (p. 88), states that she regarded herself as the 'Annie' of this song, doubtless from her recognising in it, in connection with her own Christian name, some scene of nocturnal courtship in which she and the bard had been concerned. It is added, that on meeting Burns after the publication of the song, she told him that she had little expected to be celebrated by him in print; when he gaily said: 'O ay, I was just wanting to give you a cast among the lave [*rest*].' It was her lot to keep a house of entertainment in Cumnock during the greater part of her long life. She is described as a tall and masculine-looking woman. To the last, she would sing the song of the *Rigs o' Barley*, and speak affectionately of the memory of the poet.

Of a third ditty we have also some particulars. It was a more serious and durable affair than either of the preceding. The heroine was a young woman acting as a superior servant in the house of Mr Montgomery of Coilsfield; hence she was called by Burns Montgomery's Peggy. The poet's acquaintance with her commenced in the same way as that of the Laird of Dumbiedykes with the lady whom he chose as his wife—that is, by their sitting in the same seat in church.[1] He himself tells us that he entered on a courtship, partly from a desire to shew his skill in the writing of *billets doux*—a kind of exercise in composition, of the dangers of which he, as an unreflecting poet, was of course quite unaware. By and by, as might have been expected, he came to write of the damsel in a somewhat fervent strain:—

MONTGOMERY'S PEGGY.

TUNE—*Gala Water.*

Although my bed were in yon muir,
  Amang the heather, in my plaidie,
Yet happy, happy would I be,
  Had I my dear Montgomery's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
  And winter nights were dark and rainy;
I'd seek some dell, and in my arms
  I'd shelter dear Montgomery's Peggy.

[1] These particulars are from Mrs Begg.

Were I a baron proud and high,
And horse and servants waiting ready,
Then a' 't wad gie o' joy to me,
The sharin 't with Montgomery's Peggy.

When he at length began to make serious demonstrations, he found that the heart of Peggy had been for some time engaged to another, and it cost him, as he tells us, some heartaches to get quit of the affair.

There is a fourth song, on the history of which a little obscurity rests. It is alluded to by the poet himself as 'the ebullition of that passion which ended the school business' at Kirkoswald. It appears, however, from the style of composition, to have been produced some years after the visit to Kirkoswald, when the acquaintance with the fair *fillette* who had overset his trigonometry was temporarily renewed. The date of this revived passion may be set down to the summer and autumn of 1784, for there is extant a brief letter written by him in November of that year to Thomas Orr of Park, in which he speaks of an affair of gallantry as embarrassing him, so that he was glad to have had 'Peggy' off his hand, this Peggy being, according to his sister, the same Margaret Thomson whom he had seen as a stripling at Kirkoswald. The song is one presenting some sweet descriptive lines, but not apparently calculated for popular singing:—

SONG COMPOSED IN AUGUST.

TUNE—*I had a Horse, I had nae mair.*

Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs, on whirring wings,
Amang the blooming heather:
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night
To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
The soaring hern the fountains: heron
Through lofty groves the cushat roves, wood-pigeon
The path of man to shun it;
The hazel-bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus every kind their pleasure find,
  The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine;
  Some solitary wander:
Avaunt, away! the cruel sway,
  Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murdering cry,
  The fluttering gory pinion.

But Peggy, dear, the evening's clear,
  Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view,
  All fading-green and yellow:
Come, let us stray our gladsome way,
  And view the charms of nature;
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
  And every happy creature.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
  Till the silent moon shine clearly;
I'll grasp thy waist, and fondly prest,
  Swear how I love thee dearly:
Not vernal showers to budding flowers,
  Not autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
  My fair, my lovely charmer![1]

In April of 1783, the poet opened a commonplace-book with the following matters:—

Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, &c., by Robert Burness—a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it, but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature, rational and irrational. As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature to see how a ploughman thinks and feels

[1] Mrs Begg remembers, about the time of her brother's attachment to Jean Armour, seeing this song freshly written out amongst his papers, with the name 'Jeanie' instead of 'Peggy,' and the word 'Armour' instead of 'charmer,' at the end of the first and fifth verses. She therefore suspects that the poet has, through inadvertency, made a mistake in assigning this song to Miss Thomson. The present editor has not deemed himself justified on such a ground to reject so direct a statement of the poet himself. Perhaps he may have written the song for Miss Thomson, and only temporarily dethroned her name for the sake of a newer love. It seems next to impossible that Burns could have ever published the song with a change so calculated to debase its poetical value as the substitution of 'Armour' for 'charmer.'

under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, on all the species.

'There are numbers in the world who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print.'—SHENSTONE.

'Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil or our pen designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind.'—*Ibid.*

April 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into, still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If anything on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

The next entry, bearing date August, makes the first allusion we have from him to his literary performances:—

August.

There is certainly some connection between love, and music, and poetry; and therefore I have always thought it a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love composition:

'As toward her cot he jogged along,
Her name was frequent in his song.'[1]

For my own part, I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got once heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were in a manner the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity, unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly; but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue

[1] 'The sun was sleeping in the main,
Bright Cynthia silvered all the plain,
When Colin turned his team to rest,
And sought the lass he loved the best.
As toward her cot he jogged along,
Her name was frequent in his song;
But when his errand Dolly knew,
She said she'd something else to do,' &c.
The Lark, 1765. Vol. i. p. 89.

sincere. The subject of it was a young girl, who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of her then, but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end—

'Oh once I loved a bonnie lass,' &c.[1]

Lest my works should be thought below criticism, or meet with a critic who perhaps will not look on them with so candid and favourable an eye, I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street-ballads; and, on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with, and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the sex—the agreeables—or what, in our Scotch dialect, we call a sweet sonsy lass. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it, and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is mere expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea—a sweet sonsy lass: the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza; but the second and fourth lines, ending with short syllables, hurt the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies, at the remembrance.

It has been remarked, that from the time of his coming in contact with the seaport characters of Irvine, the virtuous principles which he had acquired under the guidance of his father no longer held firm sway over him. It is not desirable to draw his frailties too broadly from the dread abode where, in common with his merits, they have gone to their repose; but it is interesting to find that, underneath the proud scorn which he used as a defence against vulgar criticism, he entertained the penitence worthy of a manly and humane heart. We trace this clearly in an entry of the commonplace-book—

September.

I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher, Mr Smith, in his excellent Theory of Moral Sentiments, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can imbitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well under those calamities in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but *when our own follies or crimes have made us miserable*

[1] See *ante*, the song of *Handsome Nell.*

and wretched, to bear up with manly firmness, and, at the same time, have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self-command.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe:
In every other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say: 'It was no deed of mine;'
But when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added: 'Blame thy foolish self!'
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse;
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involvéd others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly loved us,
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin!
Oh burning hell! in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener lash!
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down its agonising throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
Oh happy! happy! enviable man!
Oh glorious magnanimity of soul!

There is something like the same consciousness of staining errors in the next entry, which is dated March 1784:—

I have often observed, in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him; though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be, with strict justice, called wicked. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening—how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation; and what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest, how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all—I say, *any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him with a brother's eye.*

I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of blackguards, sometimes further than was consistent with the safety of my character; those

who, by thoughtless prodigality or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay, sometimes stained with guilt, I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues—magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty.[1]

He here probably makes allusion to some of his Irvine companionships. The ensuing entries are near the same date, and highly illustrative of the feelings and temper of the young poet at this period:—

April.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment which are in a manner peculiar to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the

> 'Mighty tempest and the hoary waste,
> Abrupt and deep, stretched o'er the buried earth,'

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to everything great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the winds.' In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following:—

> 'The wintry west extends his blast,' &c.[2]

Shenstone finely observes, that love-verses, writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe

[1] 'I cannot say with the poet that I ever courted the acquaintance of blackguards; but though the labouring-man may select his friends, he cannot choose his work-fellows; and so I have frequently *come in contact* with blackguards, and have had opportunities of pretty thoroughly knowing them. And my experience of the class has been very much the reverse of that of Burns. I have usually found their virtues of a merely theatric cast, and their vices real; much assumed generosity in some instances, but a callousness of feeling, and meanness of spirit, lying concealed beneath.'—HUGH MILLER: *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, 1854.

[2] See *ante*, *Winter, a Dirge.*

to love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery and conceit from real passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test I will not pretend to say, because it is my own: only I can say that it was at the time genuine from the heart:—

'Behind yon hills where Stinsiar flows,' &c.[1]

March 1784.

There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened, and indeed effected, the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy. In this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow-trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following:—

'Oh thou Great Being! what thou art,' &c.[2]

April.

The following song is a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification; but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over:—

'My father was a farmer,' &c.[3]

April.

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided into two grand classes, which I shall call the *grave* and the *merry;* though, by the by, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. The grave I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The merry are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action, but, without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent—in particular, *he* who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are, generally, those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacy of feeling.

There cannot, of course, be a doubt that in the latter paragraph the Ayrshire peasant meant to delineate his own character.

In the early part of 1783, William Burness began to shew

[1] See *ante*, *My Nannie, O.* [2] See *ante.* [3] See *ante.*

symptoms of a speedy release from the coil of mortal life, to the infinite grief of his whole family, among whom he was ever regarded as something almost superior to human imperfection. Robert is found in June writing on this distressing subject to his cousin, Mr Burness, writer, Montrose, and at the same time giving a sensible this-world-like sketch of the state of country matters at that time in Ayrshire:—

LOCHLEA, 21*st June* 1783.

DEAR SIR—My father received your favour of the 10th current, and as he has been for some months very poorly in health, and is, in his own opinion (and indeed in almost everybody's else), in a dying condition, he has only, with great difficulty, written a few farewell lines to each of his brothers-in-law. For this melancholy reason I now hold the pen for him, to thank you for your kind letter, and to assure you, sir, that it shall not be my fault if my father's correspondence in the north die with him. My brother writes to John Caird, and to him I must refer you for the news of our family.

I shall only trouble you with a few particulars relative to the wretched state of this country. Our markets are exceedingly high —oatmeal, 17*d.* and 18*d.* per peck, and not to be got even at that price. We have indeed been pretty well supplied with quantities of white peas from England and elsewhere, but that resource is likely to fail us, and what will become of us then, particularly the very poorest sort, Heaven only knows. This country, till of late, was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of silk, lawn, and carpet-weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the shoe way, but now entirely ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from the English and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds of the quality of land, and consequently stretch us much beyond what in the event we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods in our improvements of farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed in new ones. In short, my dear sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its as unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast. Even in higher life, a couple of our Ayrshire noblemen, and the major part of our knights and squires, are all insolvent. A miserable job of a Douglas, Heron, & Co.'s Bank, which no doubt you have heard of, has undone numbers of them; and imitating English and French, and other foreign luxuries and fopperies, has ruined as many more. There is

a great trade of smuggling carried on along our coasts, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it, but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance; but Fortune, as is usual with her when she is uncommonly lavish of her favours, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them if she would leave them no worse than when she found them.

My mother sends you a small present of a cheese; 'tis but a very little one, as our last year's stock is sold off. . . .

I shall conclude this long letter with assuring you that I shall be very happy to hear from you, or any of our friends in your country, when opportunity serves.

My father sends you, probably for the last time in this world, his warmest wishes for your welfare and happiness; and my mother and the rest of the family desire to enclose their kind compliments to you, Mrs Burness, and the rest of your family, along with those of, dear sir, your affectionate cousin, R. B.

Mrs Begg's recollections of her father refer almost exclusively to his later years, when he had fallen into delicate health; but they are sufficiently distinct. The good old man seems to have impressed his children with feelings akin to devotion towards him. It was the simple effect of his infinite tenderness towards them, and of the benevolent feelings which animated his entire conduct in life. Broken down as he was in constitution, he sustained his natural and habitual cheerfulness. He was always endeavouring to make his young ones happy by the promotion of innocent mirth; never forgetting at the same time any opportunity that occurred of awakening reflection, and leading them to habits of self-culture. Mrs Begg never saw him angry but twice: once at a young lad for wasting some hay, when he had just returned weary and irritated from an interview about the unfortunate lawsuit; the other time, when an old man, to whom he had shewn much kindness, told something that was false regarding him. On this latter occasion, an altercation took place in the kitchen, and Mrs Burness gave her husband a reproachful look. He sternly said: 'There must be no gloomy looks here.' A solitary example of severity towards his wife which, on retrospect, gave much pain to all concerned. Mrs Burness reported, that he had never administered what might truly be called a beating to any of their children but once to the eldest girl for obstinacy, while he was teaching her to read; and it had been attended with a good effect upon the child's temper.

At Lochlea, Mrs Begg's main occupation was one suited to her

tender years—that of tending the cattle in the fields. Her father would often visit her, sit down by her side, and tell her the names of the various grasses and wild-flowers, as if to lose no opportunity of imparting instruction. When it thundered, she was sure he would soon come to her, because he knew that on such occasions she was apt to suffer much from terror. These are simple and homely traits; but they help to fill up the sketch which Murdoch and others have given of one who seems to have been a model of humble goodness.

The worthy man died on the 13th of February 1784, leaving his family in the midst of a harassing litigation about the conditions of the lease of their farm. Mrs Begg remembers being at his bedside that morning, with no other company besides her brother Robert. Seeing her cry bitterly at the thought of parting with her dear father, he endeavoured to speak, but could only murmur a few words of comfort, such as might be suitable to a child, concluding with an injunction to her 'to walk in virtue's paths, and shun every vice.' After a pause, he said there was one of his family for whose future conduct he feared. He repeated the same expression, when the young poet came up and said: 'Oh, father, is it me you mean?' The old man said it was. Robert turned to the window, with the tears streaming down his manly cheeks, and his bosom swelling as if it would burst from the very restraint he put upon himself. The father had marked his son—

> 'Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
> By passion driven;'

and the son knew and repented his faults, though he lacked the power of correcting them. A day of virtuous reproof on the one side, and melting penitence on the other, could not have expressed more upon the subject.

It was thought proper to carry the remains of the old man to the scene of his early married life, although at some expense and inconvenience, as it was fully eight miles distant. The coffin was, according to an old fashion, arranged between two bearing-horses, placed one after the other, and thus, followed by relations and neighbours on horseback, it was carried to Alloway Kirkyard. There a small headstone over his grave was inscribed with the following stanzas by his son:—

> Oh ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
> Draw near with pious rev'rence and attend!
> Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
> The tender father, and the gen'rous friend.

The pitying heart that felt for human wo;
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
'For even his failings leaned to virtue's side.'[1]

The poet also expressed his feelings on this melancholy occasion in a letter to Mr Burness of Montrose:—

LOCHLEA, 17*th February* 1784.

DEAR COUSIN—I would have returned you my thanks for your kind favour of the 13th of December sooner, had it not been that I waited to give you an account of that melancholy event which, for some time past, we have from day to day expected.

On the 13th current I lost the best of fathers. Though, to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke, still the feelings of nature claim their part, and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends and ablest of instructors, without feeling what perhaps the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn.

I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connection in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure, with pride, acknowledge my connection with those who were allied by the ties of blood and friendship to a man whose memory I shall ever honour and revere.

I expect, therefore, my dear sir, you will not neglect any opportunity of letting me hear from you, which will very much oblige, my dear cousin, yours sincerely,

R. B.

[1] Goldsmith.

F Burns's House at Irvine.

MOSSGIEL.

1784—1786.

As a refuge for the family in case of the Lochlea landlord proceeding to extremities, Burns and his brother had engaged, at Martinmas 1783, another farm, only two or three miles distant from Lochlea, but in a different parish (Mauchline). This was the MOSSGIEL which has become connected with so many of the most noted facts in his history. It consisted of 118 acres of cold clayey soil, lying in a bare upland, little more than a mile from the village of Mauchline. It was only by ranking as creditors of their father, for the arrears of wages due on account of their respective labours, that the two sons and two grown daughters of the late William Burness rescued from the grip of the law any portion of their Lochlea stocking wherewith to recommence business in this new situation. They set about this duty with renewed resolutions of unsparing exertion and unsparing self-denial; and if circumstances had been at all favourable, they might have had little to complain of.

The poet says, in his autobiographical memoir:

I entered on this farm with a full resolution, *Come, go to, I will be wise!* I read farming-books—I calculated crops—I attended markets—and, in short, in spite of *the devil, and the world, and the flesh,* I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second, from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, *like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*

The last extract from the letter of Gilbert Burns regarding his brother's life broke off with an affirmation of the sobriety of the poet's habits in his earlier years. He goes on thus: 'A stronger proof of the general sobriety of his conduct need not be required than what I am about to give. During the whole of the time we lived in the farm of Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labour as he gave to other labourers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing, manufactured in the family, was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs drew near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Mossgiel, consisting of 118 acres, at the rent of £90 per annum

(the farm on which I live at present), from Mr Gavin Hamilton, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was £7 per annum each. And during the whole time this family concern lasted, which was for four years, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement in my brother's favour. His temperance and frugality were everything that could be wished.'

The two brothers entered upon their farm of Mossgiel for the crop of 1784, commencing their residence there in March. The *steading* furnished a neater residence for the family than they had ever before enjoyed, for it had been built to serve as a sort of country retreat for the family of Mr Gavin Hamilton, writer in Mauchline, who, as first tenant from the proprietor, the Earl of Loudoun, had sublet the farm to Burns. We have the poet's own declaration, that he was now truly anxious to do well in the world. He says: 'I read farming-books—I calculated crops—I attended markets.' 'Come, go to,' he cried, 'I will be wise.' Allan Cunningham speaks with knowledge on this part of the poet's history. 'Burns,' he says, 'was attentive as far as ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, thrashing, winnowing, and selling went: he did all this by a sort of mechanical impulse; but success in farming demands more. The farmer should know what is doing in his way in the world around; he must learn to anticipate demand; and, in short, to *time* everything. But he who pens an ode on his sheep when he should be driving them forth to pasture —who sees visions on his way home from market, and makes rhymes on them—who writes an ode on the horse he is about to yoke, and a ballad on the girl who shews the brightest eyes among his reapers—has no chance of ever growing opulent, or of purchasing the field on which he toils.' Gilbert was cast in a more worldly mould than his gifted brother, and he took immediate charge of everything; for Robert, it is said, when addressed about a business-matter, always turned it off with, 'Oh, talk to my brother about that.' But neither does it appear that Gilbert, though a sagacious and upright man, was a good farmer. A landlord, it must be admitted, is apt to take derogatory views

of an unsuccessful tenant; but yet it is significant that Mr Alexander, subsequently proprietor of Mossgiel, used to speak of Gilbert as more a man of theory than of practical address and activity. It is not, therefore, surprising that this new speculation of the poet proved no more fortunate than any of its predecessors. Dr Currie gives a curious illustration of the causes of Burns's failure as a man of the world. 'At the time,' he says, 'that our poet took the resolution of becoming *wise*, he procured a little book of blank paper, with the purpose, expressed on the first page, of making farming-memorandums. These farming-memorandums are curious enough, and a specimen may gratify the reader.' He then presents the following snatches of verse:[1]—

EXTEMPORE.

Oh why the deuce should I repine,
  And be an ill foreboder?
I 'm twenty-three, and five feet nine,
  I 'll go and be a sodger!

I gat some gear wi' mickle care,
  I held it weel thegither;
But now it 's gane, and something mair—
  I 'll go and be a sodger!

Oh leave novels, ye Mauchline belles,
  Ye 're safer at your spinning-wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks
  For rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel. . . .

Beware a tongue that 's smoothly hung,
  A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part,
  'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel. . . .

In the course of the summer 1784, the health of the poet gave way to a serious extent. The movements of the heart were affected, and he became liable to fainting fits, particularly in the night-time. As a remedy, he was obliged to have recourse to the cold-bath. A barrel of water stood near his bedside, and into this he was obliged to plunge when threatened with an access of

[1] The date, April 1782, is prefixed to the extempore verses by Currie, but perhaps only under a presumption arising from the time of life indicated. Or it may be that Burns started his memorandum-book not exactly at the time of this particular resolution

his ailment. At the same time, an overconfiding maiden was about to afford proof of the extent to which his father's fears were just—the only consolation in the case being, that that excellent man had gone where goodness no longer suffers for the guilt of those it loves. The youthful bard, feeling that death hovered over him, and reflecting with compunction on the errors partly involved in the cause of his malady, was for a time under very serious impressions. He at this time wrote what he calls in his Commonplace-book 'a Prayer when fainting fits and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy, or some other dangerous disorder which still threatens me, first put nature on the alarm.' It was subsequently published under the more simple name of

A PRAYER IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

Oh thou unknown, Almighty Cause
  Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
  Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wandered in those paths
  Of life I ought to shun;
As something, loudly, in my breast,
  Remonstrates I have done;

Thou know'st that Thou hast formèd me
  With passions wild and strong;
And listening to their witching voice
  Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
  Or frailty stept aside,
Do thou, All-good! for such thou art,
  In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have erred,
  No other plea I have,
But, Thou art good; and goodness still
  Delighteth to forgive.

He also wrote—

STANZAS ON THE SAME OCCASION.

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
  Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:
  Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms:

Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
  Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
  I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, 'Forgive my foul offence!'
  Fain promise never more to disobey;
But should my Author health again dispense,
  Again I might desert fair Virtue's way:
Again in Folly's path might go astray;
  Again exalt the brute, and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
  Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourned, yet to temptation ran?

Oh Thou, great Governor of all below!
  If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
  Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controlling power assist even me
  Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
  To rule their torrent in the allowed line;
Oh, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine![1]

It is strange that we so often hear of the faults of Burns, and of the defences advanced by his friends, and that so little notice has been taken of what at once attests the reality of those faults, and most powerfully pleads their pardon—the deep, unostentatious penitence of the bard himself.

To the same period I am disposed to refer two translations of psalms, which appeared in the Edinburgh edition of his poems:—

THE FIRST PSALM.

The man, in life wherever placed,
  Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
  Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
  Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
  Still walks before his God.

[1] In Mr Dick's MS. is apparently an earlier copy of this poem, containing some variations expressive of deeper contrition than what here appears. After 'Again I might desert fair Virtue's way,' comes, 'Again by passion would be led astray.' The second line of the last stanza is, 'If one so black with crimes dare on thee call.'

That man shall flourish like the trees
  Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
  And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt,
  Shall to the ground be cast,
And, like the rootless stubble, tost
  Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore
  Hath given them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
  Shall ne'er be truly blest.

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM.

Oh Thou, the first, the greatest friend
  Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
  Their stay and dwelling-place!

Before the mountains heaved their heads
  Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this ponderous globe itself
  Arose at Thy command;

That Power which raised and still upholds
  This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time,
  Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
  Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
  Than yesterday that 's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man
  Is to existence brought;
Again Thou say'st: 'Ye sons of men,
  Return ye into nought!'

Thou layest them with all their cares
  In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off
  With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flower,
  In beauty's pride arrayed;
But long ere night, cut down, it lies
  All withered and decayed.

Probably the penitence of the poet lasted as long as his illness. We have to make a somewhat abrupt transition in turning from it to his acquaintance with a certain rough-witted person named John Rankine, who leased the farm of Adamhill, not far from Lochlea. Rankine was a prince of boon-companions, and mingled a good deal in the society of the neighbouring gentry, but was too free a liver to be on good terms with the stricter order of the clergy. Burns and he had taken to each other, no doubt in consequence of their community of feeling and thinking on many points. The youngest daughter of Rankine had a recollection of the poet's first visit to their house at Adamhill, and related that, on his coming into the parlour, he made a circuit, to avoid a small carpet in the centre, having probably at that time no acquaintance with carpets, and too great a veneration for them to tread upon them with his ploughman's shoes. Rankine amused the fancy of Burns by a trick which he played off upon a guest of rigid professions, which ended in filling the holy man thoroughly drunk. A less questionable specimen of his clever ambuscading talents was presented in a dream which he represented himself as having had, and of which Allan Cunningham gives an account.[1]

In an epistle which Burns wrote about this time to Rankine, enclosing a batch of his poems, allusion is made to some of these circumstances:—

EPISTLE TO JOHN RANKINE.

Oh rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun and drinkin'! choice
There's mony godly folks are thinkin',
Your dreams and tricks
Will send you, Korah-like, a sinkin',
Straught to Auld Nick's.

[1] 'Lord K——, it is said, was in the practice of calling all his familiar acquaintances *brutes*. "Well, ye brute, how are ye to-day?" was his usual mode of salutation. Once in company, his lordship, having indulged in this rudeness more than his wont, turned to Rankine and exclaimed: "Brute, are ye dumb? Have ye no queer sly story to tell us?" "I have nae story," said Rankine; "but last night I had an odd dream." "Out with it by all means," said the other. "Well," said Rankine, "I dreamed I was dead, and that for keeping other than good company on earth, I was sent down stairs. When I knocked at the low door, wha should open it but the deil; he was in a rough humour, and said: 'Wha may ye be, and what's your name?' 'My name,' quoth I, 'is John Rankine, and my dwelling-place was Adamhill.' 'Gae wa' wi' ye,' quoth Satan, 'ye canna be here; ye're ane o' Lord K——'s brutes—hell's fou o' them already.'" This sharp rebuke, it is said, polished for the future his lordship's speech.'—*Cunningham's edition of Burns.*

Ye hae sae mony cracks and cants,
And in your wicked, drucken rants,
Ye mak a devil o' the saunts,
And fill them fou;
And then their failings, flaws, and wants,
Are a' seen through.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, oh dinna tear it!
Spare 't for their sakes wha aften wear it,
The lads in black!
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives 't aff their back. Tears

Think, wicked sinner, wha ye 're skaithing, harming
It 's just the blue-gown badge and claithing[1]
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naithing
To ken them by,
Frae ony unregenerate heathen
Like you or I.

I've sent you here some rhyming ware,
A' that I bargained for, and mair;
Sae, whan ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect
Yon sang,[2] ye 'll sen 't wi' canny care, thoughtful
And no neglect.

Though, faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing; can
I've played mysel a bonnie spring,
And danced my fill;
I'd better gaen and sair't the king served
At Bunker's Hill.

'Twas ae night lately, in my fun,
I gaed a roving wi' the gun,
And brought a paitrick to the grun',
A bonnie hen,
And as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

[1] Alluding to a blue uniform and badge worn by a select number of privileged beggars in Scotland, usually called King's Bedesmen. Edie Ochiltree, in the *Antiquary*, is an example of the corps.

[2] A song he had promised the author.—*B.*

The poor wee thing was little hurt;
I straikit it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinking they wad fash me for 't; trouble
But deil-ma-care!
Somebody tells the poacher-court
The hale affair.

Some auld used hands had taen a note
That sic a hen had got a shot;
I was suspected for the plot,
I scorned to lie;
So gat the whistle o' my groat,
And pay 't the fee. . . .

As soon's the clocking-time is by,
And the wee pouts begun to cry,
L—, I 'se hae sportin' by and by,
For my gowd guinea,
Though I should hunt the buckskin kye
For 't in Virginia. . . .

It puts me aye as mad's a hare;
So I can rhyme and write nae mair,
But pennyworths again is fair,
When time 's expedient:
Meanwhile I am, respected sir,
Your most obedient.

In August of this year, the poet resumes in his Commonplace-book the subject broken off in the last note:—

August.

The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men; but as I cannot please myself in the arrangement of my ideas, I must wait till further experience and nicer observation throw more light on the subject. In the meantime, I shall set down the following fragment, which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable anybody to determine which of the classes I belong to:—

GREEN GROW THE RASHES.

TUNE—*Green grow the Rashes.*

There 's nought but care on every hand,
In every hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
An 'twere na for the lasses, O.

CHORUS.

Green grow the rashes, O!
Green grow the rashes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend
Are spent amang the lasses, O.

The warly race may riches chase, — worldly
And riches still may fly them, O;
And though at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.

Gie me a canny hour at e'en, — happy
My arms about my dearie, O;
And warly cares, and warly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie, O. — topsy-turvy

For you sae douce, ye sneer at this, — grave
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly loved the lasses, O.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her 'prentice hand she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses, O.[1]

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that Being to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that renders life delightful, and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow-creatures—that so by forming piety and virtue into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the pious and the good which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave—I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of such a one as the above verses describe; one who spends the hours and thoughts which the vocations of the day can spare, with Ossian, Shakspeare, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne, &c.; or, as the maggot takes him, a gun, a fiddle, or a song to make or mend; and at all times some heart's-dear

[1] In this song Burns made an improvement upon an ancient homely ditty to the same air. It has been pointed out that the last admirable verse is formed upon a conceit, which was put into print long before the days of Burns, in a comedy entitled *Cupid's Whirligig*, published in 1607. The passage in the comedy is an apostrophe to the female sex, as follows:—

'Oh woman——
—— since we
Were made before ye, should we not love and
Admire ye as the last, and therefore perfect'st work
Of Nature? Man was made when Nature was
But an apprentice, but woman when she
Was a skilful mistress of her art.'

It might be presumed that Burns had no chance of seeing the old play; but it appears that the passage has been transferred into a book which was not very scarce in his time—namely, *The British Muse, a Collection of Thoughts, by Thomas Hayward, Gent.* 4 vols. London, 1738.

bonnie lass in view—I say I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of such a one are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the even lawful bustling and straining after the world's riches and honours: and I do not see but he may gain heaven as well—which, by the by, is no mean consideration—who steals through the vale of life amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way, as he who, straining straight forward, and perhaps spattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see and be seen a little more conspicuously than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term the poor, indolent devil he has left behind him.

This is evidently an attempt to reconcile himself to the choice which powerful impulse was forcing upon him, of the lyre instead of the plough.

For some years before leaving Lochlea, Burns had joined a fraternity of freemasons who met in a small public-house in the village of Torbolton.[1] His generous and social temper disposed him to take a warm part in their festive proceedings; and his witty intelligent conversation made him speedily ascend to a leading-place in the lodge.[2] His name occurs in their books as Depute-master, July 27, 1784, and in this capacity he signs minutes for two or three years thereafter. According to the report of old associates at the village, he was 'so keen a mason, that he would hold lodges for the admission of new members in his own house,' and when removed to Mossgiel, four miles distant, he continued to attend regularly. All this is to be attributed to the social spirit alone, for Burns was not a convivialist for the sake of the gross indulgences involved in that character. Any bacchanalianism which appears in his verses was not from the heart, as his ravings on amatory subjects usually are. He was here merely the literary medium of a recognised common sentiment. Such a character appears, we think, conspicuously in a piece referrible to the Torbolton festivities:—

THE CURE FOR ALL CARE.

TUNE—*Prepare, my dear Brethren, to the Tavern let's fly.*

No churchman am I for to rail and to write,
No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving a snare—
For a big-bellied bottle's the whole of my care.

[1] Burns was *made* as a mason by Alexander Wood, tailor in Torbolton. The first mason he himself made was Matthew Hall, a noted musician, long after resident in Newton-upon-Ayr.—*Ballads and Songs of Ayrshire.*

[2] See Appendix, No. 5.

The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow;
I scorn not the peasant, though ever so low;
But a club of good fellows, like those that are here,
And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit with his purse;
But see you The Crown, how it waves in the air!
There a big-bellied bottle still eases my care.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;
I found that old Solomon provèd it fair,
That a big-bellied bottle 's a cure for all care.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter informed me that all was to wreck;—
But the pursy old landlord just waddled up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

'Life's cares, they are comforts'[1]—a maxim laid down
By the bard, what d'ye call him, that wore the black gown;
And, faith, I agree with th' old prig to a hair;
For a big-bellied bottle 's a heaven of care.

ADDED IN A MASON LODGE.

Then fill up a bumper, and make it o'erflow,
And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May every true brother of th' compass and square
Have a big-bellied bottle when harassed with care!

This appears as a mere exercise in verse-making, on the model of some of the jolly ditties to be found in the song-books of the last century. One somewhat like it occurs in the *Charmer* (1751), in which the poet excuses himself for the desertion of his Chloe by pointing to the superior charms of wine—one verse being:

'She, too, might have poisoned the joy of my life,
With nurses and babies, and squalling and strife;
But my wine neither nurses nor babies can bring,
And a big-bellied bottle's a mighty good thing.'

[1] Young.

TO MR JAMES BURNES, MONTROSE.

MOSSGIEL, *August* 1784.

We have been surprised with one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the moral world which I daresay has happened in the course of this half-century. We have had a party of [the] Presbytery [of] Relief, as they call themselves, for some time in this country. A pretty thriving society of them has been in the burgh of Irvine for some years past, till, about two years ago, a Mrs Buchan from Glasgow came, and began to spread some fanatical notions of religion among them, and in a short time made many converts; and among others their preacher, Mr White, who, upon that account, has been suspended and formally deposed by his brethren. He continued, however, to preach in private to his party, and was supported, both he and their spiritual mother, as they affect to call old Buchan, by the contributions of the rest, several of whom were in good circumstances; till, in spring last, the populace rose and mobbed Mrs Buchan, and put her out of the town; on which all her followers voluntarily quitted the place likewise, and with such precipitation, that many of them never shut their doors behind them. One left a washing on the green, another a cow bellowing at the crib without food, or anybody to mind her; and after several stages, they are fixed at present in the neighbourhood of Dumfries. Their tenets are a strange jumble of enthusiastic jargon; among others, she pretends to give them the Holy Ghost by breathing on them, which she does with postures and practices that are scandalously indecent. They have likewise disposed of all their effects, and hold a community of goods, and live nearly an idle life, carrying on a great farce of pretended devotion in barns and woods, where they lodge and lie altogether, and hold likewise a community of women, as it is another of their tenets that they can commit no moral sin. I am personally acquainted with most of them, and I can assure you the above mentioned are facts.

This, my dear sir, is one of the many instances of the folly of leaving the guidance of sound reason and common sense in matters of religion.

Whenever we neglect or despise these sacred monitors, the whimsical notions of a perturbated brain are taken for the immediate influences of the Deity, and the wildest fanaticism, and the most inconstant absurdities, will meet with abettors and converts. Nay, I have often thought that the more out-of-the-way and ridiculous the fancies are, if once they are sanctified under the sacred name of religion, the unhappy mistaken votaries are the more firmly glued to them.

R. B.

We must now proceed with the entries in his Commonplace-book:—

EGOTISMS FROM MY OWN SENSATIONS.

May 8 [1784?]

I don't well know what is the reason of it, but somehow or other, though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved, yet I never could get the art of commanding respect. I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in what Sterne calls 'that under-strapping virtue of discretion.' I am so apt to a *lapsus linguæ*, that I sometimes think the character of a certain great man I have read of somewhere is very much *apropos* to myself—that he was a compound of great talents and great folly. N.B.—To try if I can discover the causes of this wretched infirmity, and, if possible, to mend it.

Between this entry and the next, which is dated August, he inserts a few snatches of verse, which possibly, however, are the production of a period somewhat later:—

Though cruel Fate should bid us part,
  As far 's the Pole and Line,
Her dear idea round my heart
  Should tenderly entwine.

Though mountains frown and deserts howl,
  And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
  I still would love my Jean.

One night as I did wander,
  When corn begins to shoot,
I sat me down to ponder,
  Upon an auld tree-root.

Auld Ayr ran by before me,
  And bickered to the seas, raced
A cushat crooded o'er me, wood-pigeon
  That echoed through the braes.

ROBIN.

TUNE—*Dainty Davie.*

There was a lad was born in Kyle,
But whatna day o' whatna style,
I doubt it 's hardly worth my while
  To be sae nice wi' Robin.
    Robin was a rovin' boy,
      Rantin' rovin', rantin' rovin';
    Robin was a rovin' boy,
      Rantin' rovin' Robin!

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane
Was five-and-twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
  Blew handsel[1] in on Robin.

The gossip keekit in his loof, peeped—palm
Quo' scho, wha lives will see the proof,
This waly boy will be nae coof; goodly—fool
  I think we'll ca' him Robin.

He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
But aye a heart aboon them a';
He'll be a credit till us a'—
  We'll a' be proud o' Robin.

But sure as three times three mak nine,
I see by ilka score and line,
This chap will dearly like our kin',
  So leeze me on thee, Robin.[2] blessings

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT RUISSEAUX.[3]

Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He'll gabble rhyme nor sing nae mair,
Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,
  Nae mair shall fear him;
Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care,
  E'er mair come near him.

To tell the truth, they seldom fash't him, troubled
Except the moment that they crush't him;
For sune as chance or fate had hush't 'em,
  Though e'er sae short,
Then wi' a rhyme or sang he lash't 'em,
  And thought it sport.

Though he was bred to kintra wark,
And counted was baith wight and stark,
Yet that was never Robin's mark
  To mak a man;
But tell him, he was learned and clark,
  Ye roosed him than! praised

[1] A gift for a particular season, or the first money received on any particular occasion.

[2] It has been said, but upon no good authority that I am aware of, that there was some foundation in fact for this tale of a gossip—a wayfaring woman, who chanced to be present at the poet's birth, having actually announced some such prophecies respecting the infant placed in her arms. Some similar circumstances attended the birth of Mirabeau.

[3] Ruisseaux, *Fr.* for rivulets, a translation of his own name.

In the first of these versicles, he alludes to the attachment which he had formed for the most celebrated of all his heroines, and his subsequent wife—JEAN. She was the daughter of a master-mason named Armour, residing in the village of Mauchline. Her husband has perfectly described her at this period of her life—

A dancin', sweet, young handsome quean,
Of guileless heart.

The acquaintance appears to have commenced not long after the poet took up his residence at Mossgiel. There was a race at Mauchline in the end of April, and there it was customary for the young men, with little ceremony, to invite such girls as they liked off the street into a humble dancing-hall, where a fiddler had taken up his station to give them music. The payment of a penny for a dance was held by the minstrel as guerdon sufficient. Burns and Jean happened to be in the same dance, but not as partners, when some confusion and a little merriment was excited by his dog tracking his footsteps through the room. He playfully remarked to his partner, that 'he wished he could get any of the lasses to like him as well as his dog did.' A short while after, he passed through the Mauchline washing-green, where Jean, who had overheard his remark, was bleaching clothes. His dog running over the clothes, the young maiden desired him to call it off, and this led them into conversation. Archly referring to what passed at the dance, she asked if 'he had yet got any of the lasses to like him as well as his dog?' From that time their intimacy commenced. The affections of Burns were quickly centered upon her. There were other maidens in Mauchline, some with weightier attractions, but no one could henceforth compete with Jean. So he himself tells us:—

THE BELLES OF MAUCHLINE.

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a',
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In Lon'on or Paris, they'd gotten it a'.
Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw,
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton;
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'.[1]

[1] It may be gratifying to curiosity to know the fates of the six belles of Mauchline. Miss Helen Miller, the first mentioned, married Burns's friend, Dr Mackenzie. The 'divine' Miss Markland became through our poet acquainted with, and subsequently married to, Mr

Burns was now twenty-six years old, an age at or before which poetical talent has usually displayed itself in nearly its utmost perfection; yet he had then composed only a few songs upon the bonny lasses of his neighbourhood, and a small number of poems of a thoroughly minor description. He had hitherto, indeed, only expressed some of the predominant feelings of his own bosom, or commented on some of the more striking circumstances of his own condition. To practise poetry as an art, whether to attain perfection in it for its own sake, or as something that might help him forward in life, had never occurred to him. Unlike what would have happened with such a man in these days of universal reading, and nearly as universal writing; but in the time of Burns, rustic bards, when they arose, were little tempted to aspire to the honours of print, and scarcely a single volume by such a person had as yet seen the light in Scotland. Burns was still, therefore, without an aim—alternately groaning under the ill-requited labours of his farm, and the darkness of all his worldly prospects, and indulging in merry bouts at mason-lodges, where care was for the time cast aside, and his soul expanded under the glowing sun of ideal philanthropy. A minute chronology is here of more importance in illustrating the literary history of Burns than his biographers seem hitherto to have observed. It is a remarkable circumstance that the mass of the poetry which has given this extraordinary man his principal fame, burst from him in the course of a comparatively short space of time—certainly not exceeding fifteen months. It began to flow of a sudden, and it ran on in one impetuous, brilliant stream, till it seemed to have become, comparatively speaking, exhausted.

In the well-known letter of Gilbert Burns, it is affirmed that the Torbolton period was one marked by little improvement. This is in the main true. Burns had advanced in this period from his nineteenth to his twenty-sixth year; he had freely given way to his strong instinct for *reading;* he had used means to sharpen his intellect in the debating-club; he had written, as we have

Finlay, an officer of Excise, first at Torbolton, afterwards at Greenock. The witty Miss Jean Smith bestowed herself upon Mr Candlish, who also was a friend of Burns. The 'braw' Miss Betty (Miller), sister of the first of the series, became Mrs Templeton, and died early in life. Miss Morton gave her beauty and fortune to Mr Paterson, a 'merchant' in Mauchline. Of Armour's history Immortality has taken charge. It is remarkable that, in 1851, when this work was going for the first time through the press, three of these ladies survived—namely, Mrs Finlay, Mrs Paterson, and Mrs Candlish. All have since (January 1854) parted from time. When Mrs Paterson, at eighty-seven, was within a few hours of breathing her last, a grandson asked if she remembered Burns. 'Ay, brawly that!' was her reply.

seen him write, excellent prose epistles to his father and cousin, besides some love-ditties, and a few small poems. Yet we may well believe that any progress he had made was of a rambling and desultory nature, very different from what might have been attained if he had all the time been steadily pursuing one intellectual object. Neither can we doubt that his vein of poetry would have been better worked during this period, if the poor poet had been allowed to indulge in the slightest hope of turning it to the same account as more substantial mines. But this is especially the period when he was 'unfitted with an aim.' He had nothing placed before him which he might hope to gain by any means within his power. Probably any song he wrote in those days, or any time he spent in reading, was looked upon as an indication of tendencies unfavourable to his worldly prospects, such as these were. Such things could not be very highly approved of in a family circle where hard work had come to be looked to as the only means, and, after all, a barely sufficient one, to keep sheer starvation at a distance. Perhaps, as the poet was not without a tolerable share of worldly sense, they were in his secret bosom no more highly approved of by himself.

The year 1784 had therefore arrived—Burns was passing through his twenty-sixth summer—and he had as yet written little, and that little, as we have seen, was not, generally speaking, of a nature to have much distinguished him. From this time, however, or a time not long subsequent, there is a great change in Burns.

The first true determination of his mind towards literary exertion, with a feeling as to its usual aims and results, appears in certain entries in his Commonplace-book, which are undated, so far as the year is concerned, but may, though not without some hesitation, be set down to 1784. Here we see him at length beginning to view his literary powers as giving him at least a chance of ranking with the unknown bards of the past, from whom Scotland mainly derives her national stock of songs and ballads:—

August.

However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Fergusson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c., immortalised in such celebrated performances, while my dear native country—the ancient bailieries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern times for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants—a

country where civil, and particularly religious liberty, have ever found their first support, and their last asylum—a country, the birthplace of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish history, particularly a great many of the actions of the glorious Wallace, the saviour of his country; yet we have never had one Scotch poet of any eminence to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on Ayr, and the heathy mountainous source and winding sweep of Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but, alas! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius and education. Obscure I am, and obscure I must be, though no young poet, nor young soldier's heart, ever beat more fondly for fame than mine—

> 'And if there is no other scene of being
> Where my insatiate wish may have its fill—
> This something at my heart that heaves for room,
> My best, my dearest part, was made in vain.'

August.

A FRAGMENT.

TUNE—*I had a Horse, I had nae mair.*

When first I came to Stewart Kyle,
My mind it was na steady,
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade,
A mistress still I had aye.

But when I came roun' by Mauchline toun,
Not dreadin' anybody,
My heart was caught before I thought,
And by a Mauchline lady.

September.

There is a great irregularity in the old Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of *The Mill, Mill, O,* to give it a plain, prosaic reading, it halts prodigiously out of measure: on the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's collection of Scotch songs, which begins: 'To Fanny fair could I impart,' &c., is in most exact measure, and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic, one above the biases of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature, how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and tamely methodical, compared with the wild warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first! This is particularly the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical

syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet, very frequently, nothing, not even like rhyme, or sameness of jingle, at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine, that perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which shew them to be the work of a masterly hand: and it has often given me many a heartache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (oh how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now 'buried among the wreck of things which were.'

Oh ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well: the last, the meanest of the Muse's train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love: he, too, has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his Muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones!—and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

September 8.

The following fragment is done something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scottish piece called *M'Millan's Peggy*, and sings to the tune of 'Gala Water.' My Montgomery's Peggy was my deity for six or eight months. She had been bred (though, as the world says, without any just pretence for it) in a style of life rather elegant; but as Vanburgh says, in one of his comedies: 'My —— star found me out' there too; for though I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or, to tell the truth, which will scarcely be believed, a vanity of shewing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish

gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me one day, in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another; but, with the greatest friendship and politeness, she offered me every alliance except actual possession. I found out afterwards that what she told me of a pre-engagement was really true; but it cost me some heartaches to get rid of the affair.

I have even tried to imitate, in this extempore thing, that irregularity in the rhyme which, when judiciously done, has such a fine effect on the ear.

FRAGMENT.

Although my bed were in yon muir, &c.[1]

There is a fragment in imitation of an old Scotch song, well known among the country ingle-sides. I cannot tell the name either of the song or the tune, but they are in fine unison with one another. By the way, these old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental, that when one would compose to them, to 'south the tune,' as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration, and raise the bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry. I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the song and tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times:—

'When clouds in skies do come together
  To hide the brightness of the weather,
There will surely be some pleasant weather
  When a' their storms are past and gone.[2]

'Though fickle fortune has deceived me,
  She promised fair, and performed but ill;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereaved me,
  Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.

'I'll act with prudence as far's I'm able,
  But if success I must never find,
Then come misfortune, I bid thee welcome,
  I'll meet thee with an undaunted mind.'

The above was an extempore, under the pressure of a heavy train of misfortunes, which indeed threatened to undo me altogether. It was just at the close of that dreadful period mentioned, p. viii.;[3] and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there

[1] See *ante*, the song entitled *Montgomery's Peggy*.

[2] Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse.—*B.*

[3] Reference is here made to that part of the Commonplace-book bearing date March 1784.

has always been since a tempest brewing round me in the grim sky of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will some time or other, perhaps ere long, overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell, to pine in solitary, squalid wretchedness. However, as I hope my poor country Muse, who, all rustic, awkward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may even then learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and *sowth a sang* to soothe my misery.

'Twas at the same time I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style. I am not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly; so it can never see the light, and perhaps 'tis no great matter, but the following were the verses I composed to suit it:—

Oh raging fortune's withering blast
  Has laid my leaf full low, O!
Oh raging fortune's withering blast
  Has laid my leaf full low, O!

My stem was fair, my bud was green,
  My blossom sweet did blow, O;
The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,
  And made my branches grow, O.

But luckless fortune's northern storms
  Laid a' my blossoms low, O,
But luckless fortune's northern storms
  Laid a' my blossoms low, O.

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air.

To quote the valuable letter of his brother Gilbert: 'Among the earliest of his poems was the *Epistle to Davie*. Robert often composed without any regular plan. When anything made a strong impression on his mind, so as to rouse it to any poetic exertion, he would give way to the impulse, and embody the thought in rhyme. If he hit on two or three stanzas to please him, he would then think of proper introductory, connecting, and concluding stanzas; hence the middle of a poem was often first produced. It was, I think, in summer 1784, when in the interval of harder labour, he and I were weeding in the garden (kail-yard), that he repeated to me the principal part of this epistle. I believe the first idea of Robert's becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was much pleased with the epistle, and said to him I was of opinion it would bear being printed.'

This poem appears to have been completed, as it now stands, in January 1785, for a copy in the poet's handwriting exists in possession of Miss Grace Aiken, Ayr, bearing that date, and with the following more ample title—*An Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet, Lover, Ploughman, and Fiddler.*

EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

January —

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
  And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or two o' rhyme,
  In hamely westlin' jingle.
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
  Ben to the chimla lug, — in—ear
I grudge a wee the great folk's gift, — little
  That live sae bien and snug: — comfortably
    I tent less, and want less
      Their roomy fireside;
    But hanker and canker
      To see their cursed pride.

It 's hardly in a body's power
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
  To see how things are shared;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant, — fools
  And ken na how to wair 't; — know—spend
But, Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head, — trouble
  Though we hae little gear — wealth
We 're fit to win our daily bread,
  As lang 's we 're hale and fier: — sound
    'Mair spier na, nor fear na,'[1] — ask
      Auld age ne'er mind a feg, — fig
    The last o 't, the warst o 't,
      Is only but to beg.[2]

[1] Ramsay.

[2] 'The old-remembered beggar, even in my own time, like the baccoch, or travelling cripple of Ireland, was expected to merit his quarters by something beyond an exposition of his distresses. He was often a talkative, facetious fellow, prompt at repartee, and not withheld from exercising his power that way by any respect of persons, his patched cloak giving him the privilege of the ancient jester. To be a *guid crack*—that is, to possess talents for conversation—was essential to the trade of a "puir body" of the more esteemed class; and Burns, who delighted in the amusement their discourses afforded, seems to have looked forward

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are crazed, and bluid is thin,
  Is doubtless great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Even then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste
  Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a'
  Intended fraud or guile,
However fortune kick the ba',
  Has aye some cause to smile:
    And mind still, you'll find still,
      A comfort this nae sma';
    Nae mair then, we'll care then,
      Nae farther we can fa'.

What though, like commoners of air,
We wander out we know not where,
  But either house or hal'? hold
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
  Are free alike to all.

with gloomy firmness to the possibility of himself becoming, one day or other, a member of their itinerant society. In his poetical works, it is alluded to so often as perhaps to indicate that he considered the consummation as not utterly impossible. Thus, in the fine dedication of his works to Gavin Hamilton, he says:

> "And when I downa yoke a naig,
> Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg."

Again, in his *Epistle to Davie*, a brother poet, he states that, in their closing career,

> "The last o't, the warst o't,
> Is only but to beg."

And after having remarked, that

> "To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
> When banes are crazed, and bluid is thin,
> Is doubtless great distress,"

the bard reckons up, with true poetical spirit, that free enjoyment of the beauties of nature which might counterbalance the hardship and uncertainty of the life even of a mendicant. In one of his prose letters, to which I have lost the reference, he details this idea yet more seriously, and dwells upon it, as not ill adapted to his habits and powers. As the life of a Scottish mendicant of the eighteenth century seems to have been contemplated without much horror by Robert Burns, the author can hardly have erred in giving to Edie Ochiltree something of poetical character and personal dignity above the more abject of his miserable calling. The class had, in fact, some privileges. A lodging, such as it was, was readily granted to them in some of the outhouses; and the awmous (alms) of a handful of meal (called a gowpen) was scarce denied by the poorest cottager. The mendicant disposed these, according to their different quality, in various bags around his person, and thus carried about with him the principal part of his sustenance, which he literally received for the asking. At the houses of the gentry, his cheer was mended by scraps of broken meat, and perhaps a Scottish "twalpenny," or English penny, which was expended in snuff or whisky. In fact, these indolent peripatetics suffered much less real hardship and want of food than the poor peasants from whom they received alms.'—SIR WALTER SCOTT—*Notes to Antiquary*.

In days when daisies deck the ground,
  And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound
  To see the coming year:
    On braes when we please, then,
      We 'll sit and sowth a tune; con
    Syne rhyme till 't, we 'll time till 't,
      And sing 't when we hae dune.

It 's no in titles nor in rank;
It 's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
  To purchase peace and rest;
It 's no in making muckle *mair*;
It 's no in books; it 's no in lear, learning
  To mak us truly blest;
If happiness hae not her seat
  And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
  But never can be blest:
    Nae treasures nor pleasures
      Could make us happy lang;
    The heart aye 's the part aye
      That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge and drive through wet and dry,
  Wi' never-ceasing toil;
Think ye, we are less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way, observe
  As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft, in haughty mood,
  God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that 's guid,
  They riot in excess!
    Baith careless and fearless
      Of either heaven or hell!
    Esteeming and deeming
      It 's a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
  By pining at our state;
And even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
  An 's thankfu' for them yet.
They gie the wit of age to youth;
  They let us ken oursel';
They make us see the naked truth,
  The real guid and ill.

Though losses and crosses
  Be lessons right severe,
There 's wit there, ye 'll get there,
  Ye 'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
  And flatt'ry I detest)
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy;
  And joys the very best.
There 's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
  The lover and the frien';
Ye hae your Meg,[1] your dearest part,
  And I my darling Jean!
    It warms me, it charms me,
      To mention but her name:
    It heats me, it beets me,
      And sets me a' on flame!

Oh all ye powers who rule above!
Oh Thou whose very self art love!
  Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming through my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
  Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
  Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
  And solace to my breast.
    Thou Being, all-seeing,
      Oh hear my fervent prayer!
    Still take her, and make her
      Thy most peculiar care!

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
  The sympathetic glow!
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had numbered out my weary days,
  Had it not been for you!

[1] Sillar's flame was a lass named Margaret Orr, who had the charge of the children of Mrs Stewart of Stair. Burns, accompanying his friend on a visit to Stair, found some other lasses there who were good singers, and communicated to them some of his songs in manuscript. Chance threw one of these in the way of Mrs Stewart, who, being struck by its elegance and tenderness, resolved to become acquainted with the author. Accordingly, on his next visit to the house, he was asked to go into the drawing-room to see Mrs Stewart, who thus became the first friend he had above his own rank in life. It was not the fortune of 'Meg' to become Mrs Sillar.

Fate still has blest me with a friend,
  In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
  A tie more tender still.
    It lightens, it brightens
      The tenebrific scene,
    To meet with, and greet with
      My Davie or my Jean!

Oh how that name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin', rank and file,
  Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
  Were glowrin' owre my pen. staring
My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
  Till ance he 's fairly het;
And then he 'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp, hobble
  And rin an unco fit: at a good pace
    But lest then, the beast then
      Should rue this hasty ride,
    I 'll light now, and dight now, wipe
      His sweaty, wizened hide. withered

Gilbert says in addition, and the addition is most interesting: 'I thought it [the epistle] at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scottish poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression; but here there was a strain of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet; that, besides, there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging. Robert seemed very well pleased with my criticism, and we talked of sending it to some magazine; but as this plan afforded no opportunity of learning how it would take, the idea was dropped.'

In the *seed-time* of 1785—the date is from the poet's own authority—he attended a masonic meeting at Torbolton, when there chanced to be also present the schoolmaster of the parish, a man with as powerful a self-esteem as the poet himself, though of a different kind, or manifested differently. This personage, John Wilson by name, to eke out a scanty subsistence, as Gilbert tells us, 'had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-

horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised that "Advice would be given in common disorders at the shop gratis."' On this occasion he made a somewhat too ostentatious display of his medical attainments. It is said that Burns and he had a dispute, in which the poor dominie brought forward his therapeutics somewhat offensively. Be this as it may, in going home that night, Burns conceived, and partly composed, his poem of *Death and Dr Hornbook.* 'These circumstances,' adds Gilbert, 'he related when he repeated the verses to me next afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me.'

This, then, as far as we can see, is, next to the *Epistle to Davie,* the first considerable poem by Burns manifesting anything like the vigour which is characteristic of his principal pieces:—

DEATH AND DR HORNBOOK:

A TRUE STORY.

Some books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penned:
Ev'n ministers they hae been kenned,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid at times to vend, — fib
And nail't wi' Scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell, — going
Which lately on a night befell,
Is just as true's the deil's in hell,
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel'
'S a muckle pity.

The clachan yill had made me canty— — village ale
I was na fou, but just had plenty;
I stachered whyles, but yet took tent aye — staggered
To free the ditches;
And hillocks, stanes, and bushes kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists and witches.

The rising moon began to glow'r — stare
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my power,
I set mysel';
But whether she had three or four,
I could na tell.

I was come round about the hill,
And todlin' down on Willie's mill,[1]
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker; sure
Though leeward whyles, against my will, sometimes
I took a bicker. short race

I there wi' Something did forgather,
That put me in an eerie swither; dismal hesitation
An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-taed leister on the ither fish-spear
Lay, large and lang.

Its stature seemed lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava; belly
And then, its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp and sma',
As cheeks o' branks.[2]

'Guid e'en,' quo' I; 'friend, hae ye been mawin',
When ither folk are busy sawin'?'
It seemed to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak;
At length says I: 'Friend, whare ye gaun—
Will ye go back?'

It spake right howe: 'My name is Death, hollow
But be na fley'd.' Quoth I: 'Guid faith, frightened
Ye're maybe come to stap my breath;
But tent me, billie—
I red ye weel, tak care o' scaith, advise—harm
See, there's a gully!' clasp-knife

'Guidman,' quo' he, 'put up your whittle,
I'm no designed to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle difficult
To be mislear'd;[3]
I wadna mind it, no that spittle
Out-owre my beard.'[4]

[1] Torbolton Mill, situated on the rivulet Faile, about two hundred yards to the east of the village, on the road to Mossgiel; then occupied by William Muir, an intimate friend of the Burns family—from him it was called *Willie's Mill.* 'Mr William Muir, Torbolton Mill,' appears amongst the subscribers to the Edinburgh edition of the poems, in which the above piece first appeared.

[2] Branks—a kind of wooden frame, forming, with a rope, a bridle for cows.

[3] To be put out of my art. This is not the usual sense of the word, which Burns himself interprets in his glossary into mischievous, unmannerly; but the sense of the passage can only be so understood.

[4] Both in the scythe and in this feature of the beard, which, as connected with a skeleton, is

'Weel, weel!' says I, 'a bargain be't;
Come, gie's your hand, and sae we're gree't;
We'll ease our shanks and tak a seat— limbs
Come, gie's your news;
This while ye hae been mony a gaet, road
At mony a house.'[1]

'Ay, ay!' quo' he, and shook his head,
'It's e'en a lang lang time indeed
Sin' I began to nick the thread,
And choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread,
And sae maun Death.

'Sax thousand years are near hand fled
Sin' I was to the butching bred,
And mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
To stap or scaur me;
Till ane Hornbook's taen up the trade,
And faith he'll waur me.

'Ye ken Jock Hornbook i' the clachan, village
Deil mak his king's-hood in a spleuchan! tobacco-pouch
He's grown sae weel acquant wi' Buchan[2]
And ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin', children
And pouk my hips. pluck

'See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,
They hae pierced mony a gallant heart;
But Doctor Hornbook wi' his art
And cursèd skill,
Has made them baith no worth a —;
D—'d haet they'll kill.

''Twas but yestreen, nae further gaen,
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
But deil-ma-care,
It just played dirl[3] on the bane,
But did nae mair.

in plain prose a solecism, the poet appears to have had the ordinary figure of Time in view, rather than that of Death.

[1] Alluding to a recent epidemical fever.

[2] *Buchan's Domestic Medicine*, then a popular book, and of course a readily available manual for a village Galen.

[3] A short tremulous stroke.

'Hornbook was by wi' ready art,
And had sae fortified the part,
That when I looked to my dart,
It was sae blunt,
Fient haet o't wad hae pierced the heart
O' a kail-runt. cabbage-root

'I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I near hand cowpit wi' my hurry, tumbled over
But yet the bauld apothecary
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae tried a quarry
O' hard whin rock.

'Even them he canna get attended,
Although their face he ne'er had kenned it,
Just — in a kail-blade and send it,
As soon's he smells 't,
Baith their disease and what will mend it
At once he tells 't.

'And then a' doctor's saws and whittles,
Of a' dimensions, shapes, and metals,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, and bottles,
He 's sure to hae;
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C.

'Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
True sal-marinum o' the seas;
The farina of beans and peas,
He has 't in plenty;
Aqua-fontis, what you please,
He can content ye.

'Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
Urinus spiritus of capons;
Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distilled *per se*;
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail clippings,
And mony mae.'

'Wae 's me for Johnny Ged's Hole[1] now,
Quo' I; 'if that thae news be true,
His braw calf-ward[2] where gowans grew, daisies
Sae white and bonny,
Nae doubt they 'll rive it wi' the pleugh;
They 'll ruin Johnny!'

[1] The parish gravedigger.

[2] The church-yard, which had occasionally been used as an enclosure for calves.

The creature grained an eldritch laugh, unearthly
And says: 'Ye need na yoke the pleugh,
Kirkyards will soon be tilled eneugh,
Tak ye nae fear:
They 'll a' be trenched wi' mony a sheugh, furrow
In twa-three year.

'Whare I killed ane a fair strae death,
By loss o' blood or want o' breath,
This night, I 'm free to tak my aith,
That Hornbook's skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith,
By drap and pill.

'An honest wabster to his trade,
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel-bred,
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair;
The wife slade cannie to her bed,
But ne'er spak mair.

'A bonny lass, ye ken her name,
Some ill-brewn drink had hoved her wame;
She trusts hersel', to hide the shame,
To Hornbook's care;
Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,
To hide it there.

'A country laird had taen the batts,
Or some curmurring in his guts;
His only son for Hornbook sets,
And pays him well—
The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets, young ewes
Was laird himsel'.

'That 's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way;
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, and slay,
An 's weel paid for 't;
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey
Wi' his d—d dirt:

'But hark! I 'll tell you of a plot,
Though dinna ye be speaking o 't;
I 'll nail the self-conceited sot
As dead 's a herrin':
Niest time we meet, I 'll wad a groat,
He gets his fairin'!'

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell,
Some wee short hour ayont the twal,
Which raised us baith:
I took the way that pleased mysel',
And sae did Death.[1]

Now commences that burst of poesy which we have spoken of as so remarkable in Burns's history. Early in this year, on Fasten's e'en (*Anglice,* Shrovetide), there was a *rocking* at Mossgiel. Gilbert explains this term:—'It is derived from those primitive times when the country-women employed their spare hours in spinning on a rock or distaff. This simple instrument is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of *going a-rocking,* or *with the rock.* As the connection the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave place to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talk of going with their rocks as well as women.' There was then a simple frugal social meeting at Mossgiel, when, among other entertainments, each did his or her best at singing. One sang a pleasing specimen of the rustic lore of Ayrshire, understood to be the composition of a person now in advanced years, named Lapraik, residing at Muirkirk. It was expressive of the happy affection of a husband for his wife during a period of misfortunes, and was as follows:—

'When I upon thy bosom lean,
Enraptured I do call thee mine,
I glory in those sacred ties,
That made us ane wha ance were twain.

---

[1] The publication of this poem was of course discomfiting to the poor schoolmaster, though he is said to have been in reality a respectable man in his legitimate capacity, and even useful as a dispenser of medicines in a village which had then no medical practitioner within four miles. He afterwards left the place, in consequence of a dispute about salary with the heritors, and settled in Glasgow, where he long kept a respectable seminary for youth of both sexes. One who studied under him there, describes him as in general of easy temper, but remarkable for self-complacency. He ultimately rose to be session-clerk of the Gorbals, a comparatively lucrative situation.

Gilbert Burns used to relate that Wilson once spoke to him of the poem. He said it was pretty severe in some things; but, on the whole, it was *rather* a compliment. This qualifying 'rather' amused Gilbert very much.—*Letter of Miss Isabella Begg.*

Dr Hornbook died at an advanced age in 1839. Though Torbolton has not been much enlarged since his time, it has now three regular practitioners of medicine.

A mutual flame inspires us baith,
  The tender look, the melting kiss;
Even years shall ne'er destroy our love,
  Some sweet sensation new will rise.

Have I a wish, 'tis all for thee,
  I know thy wish is me to please;
Our moments pass so sweet away,
  That numbers on us look and gaze.
Well pleased to see our happy days,
  They bid us live and still love on;
And if some cares shall chance to rise,
  Thy bosom still shall be my home.

I'll lull me there, and take my rest,
  And if that aught disturb my fair,
I'll bid her laugh her cares all out,
  And beg her not to drop a tear.
Have I a joy, 'tis all her own,
  Her heart and mine are all the same;
They're like the woodbine round the tree,
  That's twined till death shall us disjoin.'

Burns was so much pleased with the ditty, that he soon after sent a versified epistle to the supposed author:—

EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK,[1]

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

April 1, 1785.

While briers and woodbines budding green,
And paitricks scraichin' loud at e'en,
And morning poussie whiddin seen, — hare
  Inspire my Muse,
This freedom in an unknown frien'
  I pray excuse.

On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin',
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin'; — chat
And there was muckle fun and jokin',
  Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin'
  At sang about.

[1] Lapraik is apparently the same name with Leprevick, honourable in the history of Scottish literature, as having been borne by one of the most distinguished of our early printers. In 1364, David II. confirmed a charter of William de Cunningham, Lord of Carrick, to James de Leprewick, of half the lands of Polkairne, in King's Kyle (*Wood's Peerage*, i. 321), which shews that there were persons of that name at an early period connected with the district.

There was ae sang, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thirled the heart-strings through the breast,
A' to the life.

I've scarce heard ought described sae weel,
What generous manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, 'Can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?'
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About Muirkirk.

It pat me fidgin-fain to hear't, excitedly eager
And sae about him there I spier't, inquired
Then a' that kent him round declared
He had ingine, genius
That nane excelled it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

That, set him to a pint of ale,
And either douce or merry tale, grave
Or rhymes and sangs he'd made himsel',
Or witty catches,
'Tween Inverness and Teviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, and swore an aith,
Though I should pawn my pleugh and graith, harness
Or die a cadger pownie's death pedler
At some dike back,
A pint and gill I'd gie them baith
To hear your crack. chat

But, first and foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle fell,
Though rude and rough,
Yet crooning to a body's sell, humming
Does weel eneugh.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like, by chance,
And hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter!
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic folk may cock their nose,
And say: 'How can you e'er propose,
You, wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?'
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns and stools;
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better taen up spades and shools,
Or knappin-hammers.

A set o' dull conceited hashes,
Confuse their brains in college-classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
And syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire!
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then though I drudge through dub and mire
At pleugh or cart,
My Muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.[1]

Oh for a spunk o' Allan's glee, spark
Or Fergusson's, the bauld and slee,
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear eneugh for me,
If I could get it!

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Though real friends I b'lieve are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fou,
I'se no insist,
But gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

[1] 'Great Apollo! if thou art in a giving humour, give me—I ask no more—but one stroke of native humour, with a single spark of thy own fire along with it; and send Mercury, with the *rules and compasses*, if he can be spared, with my compliments to—no matter.'—*Tristram Shandy.*

I winna blaw about mysel'; boast
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends and folk that wish mé well,
They sometimes roose me; praise
Though I maun own, as monie still
As far abuse me.

But Mauchline race,[1] or Mauchline fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We'se gie ae night's discharge to Care,
If we forgather,
And hae a swap o' rhymin'-ware
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter, make
And kirsen him wi' reekin' water; christen
Syne we'll sit down and tak our whitter,[2]
To cheer our heart;
And, faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa' ye selfish warly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, and grace, manners
Even love and friendship should give place
To catch the plack! doit
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack. conversation

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
'Each aid the others,'
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle;
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,
Who am, most fervent,
While I can either sing or whissle,
Your friend and servant.[3]

Lapraik was not slow to apprehend the value of the offered correspondence. He sent an answer by the hands of his son,

[1] This was celebrated on the road adjoining to Burns's farm of Mossgiel.

[2] A hearty draught of liquor.

[3] See Appendix, No. 6.

who lately lived to relate the circumstances attending its delivery. He found the goodman of Mossgiel in a field engaged in sowing. '"I'm no sure if I ken the hand," said Burns as he took the letter; but no sooner had he glanced at its contents, than, unconsciously letting go the sheet containing the grain, it was not till he had finished reading that he discovered the loss he had sustained.'[1] Does not the reader delight in this anecdote, so significant of the character of Burns, ever ready and apt to sacrifice the worldly and the professional to the spirits of poetry and of friendship!

Without long delay, the poet replied:

SECOND EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.

April 21, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake, — low
And pownies reek in pleugh or braik,[2] — smoke
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I'm debtor,
To honest-hearted auld Lapraik,
For his kind letter.

Forjeskit sair, wi' weary legs, — Jaded
Rattlin' the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing through amang the naigs
Their ten-hours' bite,
My awkwart Muse sair pleads and begs
I would na write.

The tapetless ramfeezl'd hizzie, — heedless—overspent
She 's saft at best, and something lazy,
Quo' she: 'Ye ken, we've been sae busy
This month and mair,
That trouth, my head is grown right dizzie,
And something sair.'

Her dowff excuses pat me mad: — stupid
'Conscience,' says I, 'ye thowless jad!' — feeble
I'll write, and that a hearty blaud, — effusion
This very night;
Sae dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

[1] *Contemporaries of Burns*, p. 26.

[2] Braik, a kind of harrow.—*Burns's Glossary*. More precisely, a heavy harrow; a harrow loaded with a log. It is an implement much used in Ayr and Renfrew shires.

Shall bauld Lapraik, the king o' hearts,
Though mankind were a pack o' cartes,
Roose you sae weel for your deserts, praise
In terms sae friendly,
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts,
And thank him kindly?'

Sae I gat paper in a blink,
And down gaed stumpie in the ink:
Quoth I: 'Before I sleep a wink,
I vow I'll close it;
And if ye winna mak it clink,
By Jove I'll prose it!'

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither,
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether, nonsense
Just clean aff-loof. off-hand

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge and carp,
Though fortune use you hard and sharp;
Come, kittle up your moorland-harp tickle
Wi' gleesome touch;
Ne'er mind how Fortune waft and warp—
She's but a b—h!

She's gien me monie a jirt and fleg, jerk—kick
Sin' I could striddle owre a rig;
But, by the L—, though I should beg
Wi' lyart pow, gray
I'll laugh, and sing, and shake my leg,
As lang's I dow! can

Now comes the sax-and-twentieth simmer,
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer,
Still persecuted by the limmer,
Frae year to year;
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer, skittish
I, Rob, am here.

Do ye envy the city gent,
Behint a kist to lie and sklent, chest—deceive
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
And muckle wame,
In some bit brugh to represent
A bailie's name?

Or is 't the paughty, feudal Thane, haughty
Wi' ruffled sark and glancing cane, shirt
Wha thinks himsel' nae sheep-shank bane,
But lordly stalks,
While caps and bonnets aff are taen,
As by he walks?

Oh Thou wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit and sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please, adrift,
Through Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,
In a' their pride!

Were this the charter of our state,
'On pain o' hell be rich and great,'
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead;
But, thanks to Heaven, that 's no the gaet
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began—
'The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he!'

Oh mandate glorious and divine!
The followers o' the ragged Nine,
Poor thoughtless devils! yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons o' Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

Though here they scrape, and squeeze, and growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul handful
May in some future carcass howl,
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detestin' owl
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik and Burns arise,
To reach their native kindred skies,
And sing their pleasures, hopes, and joys,
In some mild sphere,
Still closer knit in friendship's ties,
Each passing year!

The west of Scotland was at this time, theologically, in a very different state from what it was a century before, when it gave so many martyrs to the sternest principles of Presbyterianism. There was, indeed, all over Scotland a reaction in the eighteenth century from the fervour of the seventeenth. The most moderate principles ruled in the church-courts. Many individual clergymen exercised their functions in a style for which lukewarm would be too complaisant a word. In Ayrshire, where Calvinism had formerly been in the highest vogue, there was a more than usual declension from its standard of orthodoxy. It was generally believed, and there now can be little doubt of the fact, that an Arminianism, verging towards the dogmas of Socinus, had taken possession of many pulpits. The work of John Taylor of Norwich, entitled the *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, had been extensively read in Ayrshire among the clergy as well as laity, and given rise to a pretty definite form of rationalism, which was recognised by the cant term of the *New Light*.[1] As usual, minds of an active and restless character, especially when accompanied by philanthropic dispositions, had embraced this New Light, while the mass of the vulgar, and a section of the clergy, remained steadfast under the faith as it had been among their fathers. These were called 'the Whigs,' as representing the ancient religious party of that name, or were spoken of as adherents of the *Auld Light*. It affords a striking idea of the length which the new doctrines had gone, that a busy-brained old tradesman in Kilmarnock, by name John Goldie, or Goudie, published a book freely discussing the authority of the Scriptures, first in 1780, and in a new edition in 1785, without incurring an inconvenient degree of public odium.

We have seen it stated by Dr Currie that William Burness had composed a little manual of religious belief for the use of his children, 'in which the benevolence of his heart seems to have led him to soften the rigid Calvinism of the Scottish Church into something approaching to Arminianism.' He was, in short, tinctured with the New Light, though modesty and prudence induced him to say very little on the subject. The poet, besides deriving a tendency that way from his father, had conversed with men of still more decided views at Irvine. While probably retaining, or thinking he retained, a hold of the main doctrines of Christianity, his vigorous and benevolent mind, and, as he has

[1] See Appendix, No. 7.

himself confessed, 'a desire of shining in conversation-parties'—possibly, besides all this, an enjoyment in saying things calculated to startle common minds—led him into a by no means subdued demonstration of New-Light principles. In the rustic groups which gather at church-doors before the commencement of service, or in the interval between forenoon and afternoon services, he would argue pertinaciously and loudly on such points, sometimes to the admiration, but as often to the distress or horror, of his hearers. It would be difficult to say how much of his heterodoxy was unreal, how much only temporary—a passing gust of opinion—but certainly he appeared to some at this time as entirely Socinian.[1] He seems to have believed that the religious mind of the country was undergoing a revolution which must result in the abandonment of Calvinism. Such is the spirit of a short epistle in rhyme to Goudie on the publication of the second edition of his Essays:—

EPISTLE TO JOHN GOUDIE OF KILMARNOCK,

ON THE PUBLICATION OF HIS ESSAYS.

Oh, Goudie! terror of the Whigs,
Dread of black coats and reverend wigs,
Sour Bigotry, on her last legs,
Girnin', looks back, grinning
Wishin' the ten Egyptian plagues
Wad seize you quick.

Poor gapin', glowrin' Superstition,
Wae 's me! she 's in a sad condition;
Fie! bring Black Jock, her state-physician,
To see her water.
Alas! there 's ground o' great suspicion
She'll ne'er get better.

Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,
But now she 's got an unco ripple;
Haste, gie her name up i' the chapel,[2]
Nigh unto death;
See, how she fetches at the thrapple,
And gasps for breath.

[1] He himself, in a letter to Mr Candlish, March 1787, speaks of his having, 'in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in "the daring path Spinoza trod;"' but, he adds, 'experience of the weakness, not the strength, of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.'

[2] That is, give in her name at church, to be prayed for.

Enthusiasm's past redemption,
Gane in a galloping consumption,
Not a' the quacks, wi' a' their gumption, cleverness
Will ever mend her.
Her feeble pulse gies strong presumption
Death soon will end her.

'Tis you and Taylor are the chief
Wha are to blame for this mischief,
But gin the L—'s ain fouk gat leave,
A toom tar-barrel empty
And twa red peats wad send relief,
And end the quarrel.

The person here called *Black Jock* was the Rev. John Russell, one of the ministers of the town where Goudie resided. He was a huge, dark-complexioned, stern-looking man, of tremendous energy in the pulpit, of harsh and unloving nature, and a powerful defender of the strongholds of Calvinism. There was much room for his zeal in Kilmarnock, for so long ago as 1764, a New-Light clergyman named Lindsay had been introduced there, and had of course given a certain amount of currency to what Burns called common-sense (that is, rationalistic) views. There was another zealous partisan of the Auld Light—a Mr Alexander Moodie—in the adjacent parish of Riccarton, and it was of course most desirable for two such champions in such circumstances to remain united. It so happened, however, that a dryness arose between them. The country story is, that as they were riding home one evening from Ayr, Moodie, in a sportive frame of mind, amused himself by tickling the rear of his neighbour's horse. The animal performed certain antics along the road, much to the amusement of the passing wayfarers, but greatly to the discomfiture of its rider, who, afterwards learning the trick, could not forgive Moodie for it. Afterwards, a question of parochial boundaries arose between them—it came before the presbytery for determination. 'There, in the open court,' says Mr Lockhart, 'to which the announcement of the discussion had drawn a multitude of the country-people, and Burns among the rest, the reverend divines, hitherto sworn friends and associates, lost all command of temper, and abused each other *coram populo*, with a fiery virulence of personal invective such as has long been banished from all popular assemblies, wherein the laws of courtesy are enforced by those of a certain unwritten code.' This

was too much temptation for the profane wit of Burns. He lost no time in putting the affair into the following allegorical shape:—

THE TWA HERDS; OR, THE HOLY TULZIE.[1]

Oh a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep ye frae the fox,
Or worrying tykes, dogs
Or wha will tent the waifs and crocks, stragglers—old ewes
About the dikes?

The twa best herds in a' the wast,
That e'er gae Gospel-horn a blast,
These five-and-twenty simmers past,
Oh dool to tell,
Hae had a bitter black outcast quarrel
Atween themsel'.

Oh, Moodie, man, and wordy Russell,
How could you raise so vile a bustle,
Ye'll see how New-Light herds will whistle,
And think it fine:
The L—'s cause ne'er got sic a twistle
Sin' I hae min'.

Oh, sirs! whae'er wad hae expeckit,
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,
Ye wha were ne'er by lairds respeckit,
To wear the plaid,
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank!
Nae poisoned sour Arminian stank
He let them taste,
Frae Calvin's well, aye clear, they drank—
Oh sic a feast!

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock, and tod, pole-cat—badger—fox
Weel kenn'd his voice through a' the wood,
He smelt their ilka hole and road,
Baith out and in,
And weel he liked to shed their bluid,
And sell their skin.

[1] Brawl.

What herd like Russell telled his tale,
His voice was heard through muir and dale,[1]
He kenn'd the L—'s sheep, ilka tail,
O'er a' the height,
And saw gin they were sick or hale,
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling the Gospel club,
And New-Light herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin;
Could shake them o'er the burning dub,
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—Oh do I live to see 't,
Sic famous twa should disagreet,
And names like villain, hypocrite,
Ilk ither gi'en,
While New-Light herds, wi' laughin' spite,
Say neither 's liein'!

A' ye wha tent the Gospel fauld,
There 's Duncan,[2] deep, and Peebles, shaul,[3]
But chiefly thou, apostle Auld,[4]
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, het and cauld,
Till they agree.

Consider, sirs, how we 're beset;
There 's scarce a new herd that we get,
But comes frae 'mang that cursèd set
I winna name;
I hope frae heaven to see them yet
In fiery flame.

Dalrymple[5] has been lang our fae,
M'Gill[6] has wrought us meikle wae,

[1] There was a literal truth in this line, for a person who sometimes attended Russell's prelections affirmed, that in a favourable state of the atmosphere, his voice, when he was holding forth in the open air at sacraments, might be heard at the distance of upwards of a mile.

[2] Dr Robert Duncan, minister of Dundonald.

[3] Rev. William Peebles, of Newton-upon-Ayr. See notes to *Holy Fair* and *Kirk's Alarm*.

[4] Rev. William Auld, minister of Mauchline.

[5] Rev. Dr Dalrymple, one of the ministers of Ayr. He died in 1814, having filled his charge for the uncommon period of sixty-eight years. He had baptised Burns.

[6] Rev. William M'Gill, one of the ministers of Ayr, colleague of Dr Dalrymple. See note to *Kirk's Alarm*.

And that cursed rascal ca'd M'Quhae,[1]
And baith the Shaws,[2]
That aft hae made us black and blae,
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld Wodrow[3] lang has hatched mischief,
We thought aye death wad bring relief,
But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,
A chield wha 'll soundly buff our beef;
I meikle dread him.

And monie a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forby turn-coats amang oursel';
There 's Smith for ane,[4]
I doubt he 's but a gray-nick quill,
And that ye 'll fin'.

Oh a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
Come, join your counsel and your skills
To cowe the lairds,
And get the brutes the powers themsels
To choose their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
And Learning in a woody dance, halter
And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,
That bites sae sair,
Be banished o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's and D'rymple's eloquence,
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,

[1] Minister of St Quivox, an enlightened man, and elegant preacher.

[2] Dr Andrew Shaw of Craigie, and Dr David Shaw of Coylton. Dr Andrew was a man of excellent abilities, but extremely diffident—a fine speaker, and an accomplished scholar. Dr David, in personal respects, was a prodigy. He was ninety-one years of age before he required an assistant. At that period of life he read without the use of glasses, wrote a neat small hand, and had not a furrow in his cheek or a wrinkle in his brow. He was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1775. This amiable man died April 26, 1810, in the ninety-second year of his age, and sixty-first of his ministry.

[3] There were three brothers of this name, descended from the church historian, and all ministers—one at Eastwood, their ancestor's charge; the second at Stevenston; and the third, Dr Peter Wodrow, at Torbolton. Dr Peter is the person named in the poem. The assistant and successor mentioned in the verse was M'Math, elsewhere alluded to.

[4] Rev. Mr Smith, minister of Galston. He is one of the tent-preachers in the *Holy Fair*.

M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,
And guid M'Math,
Wi' Smith, wha through the heart can glance,
May a' pack aff.

In the three last verses, the poet glances satirically at the demands made by the Old-Light party to obtain for congregations the right of choosing their own ministers, as opposite to the plan of their appointment by patrons, which had been reigning for several ages. The anti-patronage cause was almost identified with that of the Old Light, and for this reason Burns had no sympathies with it.

The poet tells us that the *Twa Herds* was the first of his poetic offspring which saw the light. 'I had,' he says, 'a notion that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst [the possibility of its being condemned as stupid], I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who could be the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause.'

The date of this event appears to be April 1785, the era of the letters to Lapraik, and probably very little after that of *Hornbook*. One Patrick Simpson carried a copy of the poem to his home in Ochiltree parish, a few miles south of Mauchline. By Patrick it was communicated to his brother, William Simpson, the parish schoolmaster, and a rhymer, who was immediately prompted to address a versified epistle to Burns, having probably heard the satire attributed to him. This was quickly answered by Burns in a beautiful poem, expressive of his intense love of nature and of country; to which, moreover, was appended a clever allegorical description of the heresy which he had adopted. In the expression, 'Our herds,' and the whole strain of this allegory, the reader will now see a connection of circumstances leading on from the *Holy Tulzie*, and confirming the present narration:—

TO WILLIAM S[IMPSON],

OCHILTREE.

May 1785.

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawly; heartily
Though I maun say 't, I wad be silly,
And unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie, fellow
Your flatterin' strain.

But I 'se believe ye kindly meant it,
I sud be laith to think ye hinted
Ironic satire, sidelins sklented — obliquely directed
On my poor Musie;
Though in sic phrasin' terms ye 've penned it, — cajoling
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,[1] — basket
Should I but dare a hope to speel — climb
Wi' Allan[2] or wi' Gilbertfield,[3]
The braes o' fame;
Or Fergusson, the writer chiel, — lad
A deathless name.

(Oh, Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye E'nbrugh gentry;
The tithe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stowed his pantry!)

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed, — rent
As whiles they 're like to be my dead,
(Oh sad disease!)
I kittle up my rustic reed; — finger
It gies me ease.

Auld Coila[4] now may fidge fu' fain, — hug herself
She 's gotten poets o' her ain,
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain, — Youths—spare
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measured style;
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle
Beside New Holland,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan.

[1] In Scotland, when a person is much exalted and mystified about anything, he is said to be in a creel.

[2] Allan Ramsay.

[3] William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, a Scottish poet contemporary with Ramsay.

[4] The district of Kyle, personified under the appellation of Coila. Burns afterwards assumed Coila as the name of his Muse.

Ramsay and famous Fergusson
Gied Forth and Tay a lift aboon;
Yarrow and Tweed, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings;
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, and Doon,
Naebody sings.

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, and Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line;
But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
And cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams and burnies shine — rivulets
Up wi' the best!

We'll sing auld Coila's plains and fells, — mountains
Her moors red-brown wi' heather-bells,
Her banks and braes, her dens and dells,
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells, — bore the bell
Frae southron billies.

At Wallace' name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat shod,
Or glorious died!

O sweet are Coila's haughs and woods — meadows
When lintwhites chant amang the buds, — linnets
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids,[1] — furtive
Their loves enjoy,
While through the braes the cushat croods — coos
With wailfu' cry!

Even winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave through the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray:
Or blinding drifts wild furious flee,
Darkening the day!

O Nature! a' thy shows and forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life and light,
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

[1] A word expressive of the quick, nimble movements of the hare, which hence is sometimes called a *whiddie* in Scotland.

The Muse, nae poet ever fand her, found
Till by himsel' he learned to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
And no think lang;
O sweet, to stray and pensive ponder
A heartfelt sang!

The war'ly race may drudge and drive,
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch and strive; push
Let me fair Nature's face descrive,
And I wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure.

Fareweel, 'my rhyme-composing brither!'
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:
Now let us lay our heads thegither,
In love fraternal;
May Envy wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal!

While Highlandmen hate tolls and taxes;
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies,[1]
While terra firma on her axis
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith and practice,
In Robert Burns.

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory 's no worth a preen; pin
I had amaist forgotten clean,
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this New Light,
'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been
Maist like to fight.

In days when mankind were but callans boys
At grammar, logic, and sic talents,
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie,
But spak their thoughts in plain braid lallans, lowland speech
Like you or me.

[1] Dead sheep—a perquisite of the shepherd.

In thae auld times, they thought the moon,
Just like a sark, or pair o' shoon, shirt—shoes
Wore by degrees, till her last roon paring
Gaed past their viewing,
And shortly after she was done,
They gat a new one.

This passed for certain—undisputed;
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,
Till chiels gat up, and wad confute it,
And ca'd it wrang;
And muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud and lang.

Some herds, well learned upo' the beuk,
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk; assert
For 'twas the auld moon turned a neuk,
And out o' sight,
And backlins-comin', to the leuk
She grew mair bright.

This was denied—it was affirmed;
The herds and hirsels were alarmed, flocks
The reverend gray-beards raved and stormed
That beardless laddies
Should think they better were informed
Than their auld daddies. fathers

Frae less to mair, it gaed to sticks;
Frae words and aiths to clours and nicks, blows and cuts
And mony a fallow gat his licks, beating
Wi' hearty crunt; dint
And some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hanged and brunt.

This game was played in monie lands,
And Auld-Light caddies bure sic hands, fellows
That, faith, the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
Till lairds forbade, by strict commands,
Sic bluidy pranks.

But New-Light herds gat sic a cowe,
Folk thought them ruined stick-and-stowe, completely
Till now amaist on every knowe hillock
Ye'll find ane placed;
And some their New-Light fair avow,
Just quite barefaced.

Nae doubt the Auld-Light flocks are bleatin';
Their zealous herds are vexed and sweatin';
Mysel' I 've even seen them greetin'
Wi' girnin' spite,
To hear the moon sae sadly lied on
By word and write.

But shortly they will cowe the loons! rascals
Some Auld-Light herds in neebor towns
Are mind't in things they ca' balloons
To tak a flight,
And stay ae month among the moons,
And see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them;
And when the auld moon's gaun to lea'e them,
The hindmost shaird, they 'll fetch it wi' them, fragment.
Just i' their pouch,
And when the New-Light billies see them,
I think they 'll crouch!

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter
Is naething but a 'moonshine matter;'
But though dull prose-folk Latin splatter
In logic tulzie, contention
I hope we bardies ken some better
Than mind sic brulzie. broil

To this period seems to be applicable an anecdote related by Professor Walker. After observing that Burns, while still unknown as a poet, numbered several clergymen among his acquaintance, he goes on to say:—'One of these communicated to me a circumstance which conveys more forcibly than many words an idea of the impression made upon his mind by the powers of the poet. This gentleman, after entering on the clerical profession, had repeatedly met Burns in company, when the acuteness and originality displayed by the latter, the depth of his discernment, the force of his expressions, and the authoritative energy of his understanding, had created in the former a sense of his power, of the extent of which he was unconscious till revealed to him by accident. The second time that he appeared in the pulpit, he came with an assured and tranquil mind, and though a few persons of education were present, he advanced some length in the service with his confidence and self-possession unimpaired; but when he observed Burns, who was of a different parish, unexpectedly enter the church, he was instantly affected with a tremor and

embarrassment which suddenly apprised him of the impression his mind, unknown to itself, had previously received. He now discovered that in their former interviews he had been gradually and imperceptibly measuring the strength of that intellectual giant, before whom he was now to exhibit his own. When it is added that the person thus affected had good abilities, improved by a careful education, and that he had also more than the ordinary portion of constitutional firmness, we may be able to conceive the degree of respect which was inspired by the talents of the unlettered ploughman, before he had been advanced to precedency by any public honours.'

It has lately been revealed that the clergyman here alluded to was the Rev. Dr Niven, afterwards minister of Dunkeld, but then only a young licentiate of divinity, acting as preceptor in the family of Mr Hamilton of Sundrum, in the neighbouring parish of Coylton. An anecdote is added on the report of Dr Niven's son. His father was sent to endeavour to bring Burns to join a party of friends at a certain hour. He found the poet engaged in thrashing. 'The message being delivered, Burns said he could not get through his thrashing in time, but added: "If you will take that *flail* and help me, I may be able to go." The doctor, a tall, powerful man, instantly threw off his coat, seized the flail, and thrashed with good-will. The thrashing was finished in time, and Burns went to the party.'[1]

We may be very sure, from the language of Burns himself, that the moment it was determined, by the roar of applause, that the *Twa Herds* was 'clever,' he no longer attempted to conceal the authorship. It obtained for him the friendship of several of the neighbouring clergy of moderate character, as the Shaws, M'Quhae, and in particular the young preacher, Mr M'Math, who had lately come to Torbolton to act as assistant to the minister of that parish. In Burns's own parish of Mauchline, the minister, Mr Auld, or, as the poet irreverently called him, *Daddy Auld*, was a rigid Whig, or partisan of the Auld Light. From him, therefore, the poet could only look for reprobation, if not hostility. Amongst the laity of his neighbourhood, he had no friend more sympathetic than his own landlord, Mr Gavin Hamilton, the Mauchline *writer*, a generous-hearted, upright man, but whose religious character did not come up to the standard of Mr Auld. Hamilton had some time before been in trouble with the parish

[1] Wood's *Collection of Scottish Songs*, iii. 184.

session or consistory, on account of defects in his religious practice. For southern readers, it must be explained that the Scottish kirk-session, consisting of the minister and his staff of lay-elders, possesses a right of discipline over members of the flock, the instrument of authority practically consisting in this —that if displeased with the life or sentiments of any one, they can withhold from him permission to take the sacrament, and thus expose him to public obloquy. It is said that the minister of Mauchline, who was, on the whole, an amiable and worthy man, would never have himself assailed Gavin Hamilton. He was, however, so unfortunate as to listen to, and act upon, the insinuations of one who was a member of his session, as well as its clerk, and who had a personal spite at Hamilton, in consequence of some dispute about the levying of a poor-rate. In August 1784, just before the annual celebration of the communion, the session resolved that certain parishioners should be remonstrated with on the score of their habitual neglect of public ordinances. Mr Hamilton, learning what had taken place, and believing that he himself was the person chiefly in view, sent the session a letter, plainly telling them that they must be conscious that they proceeded upon no just grounds of offence against him, but purely on 'private pique and ill-nature.' They fired at this, but without being able immediately to vindicate their dignity, for, in January, Mr Hamilton was successful in an appeal for the protection of the next superior court—the presbytery of Ayr. They, however, cited Mr Hamilton on the following charges: —That he still neglects to attend church, having been absent two Sundays in the past, and three in the present month; that on the third Sunday of the present month, he set out on a journey to Carrick, although admonished against so doing by the minister; that he habitually, if not totally, neglects the worship of God in his family; and, finally, that he had written an abusive letter to the session. It gives a curious idea of the practices of those days, that the session enters the names of five former and three present servants of Mr Hamilton who may be cited to give evidence on some of these charges. He produced an order from the presbytery ordering the erasure of the session minutes of which he had complained. They then carried the affair by appeal before the next higher court—the synod. We cannot follow it through all its windings; but at length it terminated in July 1785, when the session granted Mr Hamilton a certificate of being free from all ground of church censure; so that he was substantially the victor.

It appears, that on the final appearance of the case before the presbytery, Mr Hamilton's agent, Mr Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, exercised the oratorical talents for which he was locally remarkable, in exposing the secret motives of the prosecution, and the conduct of the session, one member of which appears to have been a very wretched creature. Burns had looked on with feelings keenly excited in favour of Gavin, whom he regarded as a noble-hearted man wronged by a set of malicious bigots; and he soon after produced a satire, nominally aimed at the particular elder here alluded to, commonly called *Holy Willie,* but in reality a burlesque of the extreme doctrinal views of the party to which he belonged:—

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.

Oh Thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thysel',
Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They 've done afore thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore thy sight,
For gifts and grace,
A burnin' and a shinin' light
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation,
I wha deserve sic just damnation
For broken laws,
Five thousand years 'fore my creation,
Through Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plungèd me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burning lake,
Whare d—d devils roar and yell,
Chained to a stake.

Yet I am here a chosen sample;
To shew thy grace is great and ample;
I 'm here a pillar in thy temple,
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler, an example,
To a' thy flock.

But yet, oh L—! confess I must,
At times I 'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust; troubled
And sometimes too wi' warldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But thou remembers we are dust,
Defiled in sin.

* * * *

Maybe thou lets this fleshly thorn,
Beset thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he owre high and proud should turn,
'Cause he 's sae gifted;
If sae, thy hand maun e'en be borne,
Until thou lift it.

L—, bless thy chosen in this place,
For here thou hast a chosen race:
But G— confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring thy elders to disgrace
And public shame.

L—, mind Gawn Hamilton's deserts,
He drinks, and swears, and plays at cartes,
Yet has sae monie takin' arts,
Wi' grit and sma',
Frae G—'s ain priests the people's hearts
He steals awa'.

And whan we chasten'd him therefor,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore, disturbance
As set the warld in a roar
O' laughin' at us:
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail and potatoes.

L—, hear my earnest cry and prayer,
Against the presbyt'ry of Ayr;
Thy strong right hand, L—, mak it bare
Upo' their heads,
L—, weigh it down, and dinna spare,
For their misdeeds.

Oh L—, my G—, that glib-tongued Aiken,
My very heart and saul are quakin',
To think how we stood groanin', shakin',
And swat wi' dread,
While he wi' hingin' lip and snakin',
Held up his head.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] as ye are,
[illegible] your credit;
[illegible] stain your name, fool
[illegible] ye did it.

The strength of satire here employed needs no comment. That Burns did not misrepresent the man whom he selected for ven- [illegible] is proved by events, for Holy Willie was afterwards found [illegible] of secreting money from the church-offerings, and he [illegible] his miserable life in a ditch, into which he had fallen in [illegible] from a debauch. The Rev. Hamilton Paul defends the

poem as a just exposure of an odious interpretation of Christianity; and Mr Lockhart, commenting on Mr Paul, says: 'That performances so blasphemous should have been not only pardoned, but applauded by ministers of religion, is a singular circumstance, which may go far to make the reader comprehend the exaggerated state of party-feeling in Burns's native county at the period when he first appealed to the public ear. Nor is it fair,' he adds, 'to pronounce sentence upon the young and reckless satirist, without taking into consideration the undeniable fact, that in his worst offences of this kind, he was encouraged and abetted by those who, to say nothing more about their professional character and authority, were almost the only persons of liberal education whose society he had any opportunity of approaching at the period in question.'[1]

In connection with these remarks, it may be as well for the reader to be aware, that in writing his poems against the religious party to which he was opposed, Burns set at naught the earnest advices of his mother and brother. He was disposed on most occasions to listen deferentially to these friends of his bosom; but on this point he was obstinate, to their great and lasting regret. The strength of the feeling under which he acted fully appears in the letter to Mr M'Math, onward. 'He went mad at their grimaces,' &c.

The harvest of 1785 was beset by wretched weather, and was very late. On Mossgiel the half of the crop was lost, a circumstance seriously affecting the prospects of Burns and his family. In two epistles of this period—one to his brother poet Lapraik, the other to a clerical friend—the bard alludes to the evil season, as well as to the ecclesiastical bickerings then going on:—

THIRD EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK.[2]

September 13, 1785.

Guid speed and furder to you, Johnny,
Guid health, hale han's, and weather bonny;
Now when ye 're nickan down fu' canny — cutting
The staff o' bread,
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' bran'y
To clear your head.

[1] See Appendix, No. 8.

[2] First published by Lapraik in a volume of his own poems.

May Boreas never thrash your rigs,
Nor kick your rickles aff their legs, ricks
Sendin' the stuff o'er muirs and haggs mosses
Like drivin' wrack;
But may the tapmast grain that wags
Come to the sack.

I'm bizzie too, and skelpin' at it,
But bitter, dandin' showers hae wat it, beating
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it
Wi' muckle wark,
And took my joeteleg and whatt it, knife—cut
Like ony clark.

It's now twa month that I'm your debtor,
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter,
Abusin' me for harsh ill-nature
On holy men,
While deil a hair yoursel' ye're better,
But mair profane.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,
Let's sing about our noble sel's;
We'll cry nae jads frae heathen hills
To help, or roose us, praise
But browster-wives and whisky-stills,
They are the muses.

Your friendship, sir, I winna quat it,
And if ye mak objections at it,
Then han' in nieve some day we'll knot it, fist
And witness take,
And when wi' usquebae we've wat it,
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spared
Till kye be gaun without the herd, cows
And a' the vittel in the yard,
And theekit right, thatched
I mean your ingle-side to guard
Ae winter-night.

Then muse-inspirin' aqua vitæ
Shall make us baith sae blithe and witty,
Till ye forget ye're auld and gutty, big-bellied
And be as canty
As ye were nine year less than thretty—
Sweet ane-and-twenty!

But stooks are cowpit wi' the blast, — overturned
And now the sinn keeks in the west, — peeps
Then I maun rin amang the rest,
And quat my chanter;
Sae I subscribe myself in haste
Yours, RAB THE RANTER.[1]

EPISTLE TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH.[2]

September 17, 1785.

While at the stook the shearers cower — shock—reapers
To shun the bitter blaudin' shower, — beating
Or in gulravage rinnin' scower — confusion
To pass the time,
To you I dedicate the hour
In idle rhyme.

My Musie, tired wi' monie a sonnet
On gown, and ban', and douce black bonnet, — grave
Is grown right eerie, now she 's done it, — fearful
Lest they should blame her,
And rouse their holy thunder on it,
And anathem her.

I own 'twas rash, and rather hardy,
That I, a simple, country bardie,
Should meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
Wha, if they ken me,
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
Lowse h— upon me.

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
Their sighin', cantin', grace-proud faces,
Their three-mile prayers, and hauf-mile graces,
Their raxin' conscience, — stretching
Whase greed, revenge, and pride disgraces
Waur nor their nonsense.

[1] A sobriquet borrowed from the clever old Scotch song, *Maggy Lauder*.

[2] At that time enjoying the appointment of *assistant and successor* to the Rev. Peter Wodrow, minister of Torbolton. He was an excellent preacher, and a decided moderate. He enjoyed the friendship of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, and of Burns, but unhappily fell into low spirits, in consequence of his dependent situation, and became dissipated. He died in obscurity at Rossul, in the Isle of Mull, December 1825.

There 's Gawn,[1] misca't waur than a beast,
Wha has mair honour in his breast
Than mony scores as guid 's the priest
Wha sae abus't him;
And may a bard no crack his jest
What way they 've use't him?

See him, the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed,
And shall his fame and honour bleed
By worthless skellums, wretches
And not a Muse erect her head
To cowe the blellums? fellows

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I 'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
And tell aloud
Their jugglin' hocus-pocus arts
To cheat the crowd.

G— knows I 'm no the thing I should be,
Nor am I even the thing I could be,
But twenty times I rather would be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge, and malice fause, false
He 'll still disdain,
And then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

They take religion in their mouth;
They talk o' mercy, grace, and truth,
For what? to gie their malice skouth scope
On some puir wight,
And hunt him down, o'er right and ruth,
To ruin straight.

All hail, Religion! maid divine!
Pardon a Muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line,
Thus daurs to name thee;
To stigmatise false friends of thine
Can ne'er defame thee.

[1] Gavin Hamilton.

Though blotch't and foul wi' mony a stain,
And far unworthy of thy train,
With trembling voice I tune my strain
To join with those
Who boldly daur thy cause maintain
In spite o' foes:

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
In spite o' undermining jobs,
In spite o' dark banditti stabs
At worth and merit,
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
But hellish spirit.

O Ayr! my dear, my native ground,
Within thy presbyterial bound
A candid liberal band is found
Of public teachers,
As men, as Christians too, renowned,
And manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are named;
Sir, in that circle you are famed;
And some, by whom your doctrine 's blamed
(Which gies you honour),
Even, sir, by them your heart 's esteemed,
And winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
And if impertinent I 've been,
Impute it not, good sir, in ane
Whase heart ne'er wranged ye,
But to his utmost would befriend
Ought that belanged ye.

The meagre harvest of '85 was gathered, and Robert and Gilbert Burns must have begun to entertain serious misgivings regarding their prospects. Robert, we have seen, was by this time made aware that he could write so as to draw the approbation of something above a rustic audience. His brother, possessed, like himself, of a cultivated mind and literary taste far above the common world, was at his side to whisper what must have been a precious applause, when, in the intervals of labour, he recited some of those verses, yet fresh from the mint of his glowing mind, which have since been the rapture of multitudes, and the burden of a nation's acclaim. Gilbert tells us, that in the course of a Sunday-walk, the poet repeated to him the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, and he was

electrified by it. 'The fifth, sixth, and eighteenth stanzas thrilled with ecstacy through his soul.' Can we suppose that Robert would hear the expression of such feelings from a brother whom he knew to be a highly intelligent and reflecting person, without being stirred up into some fond apprehensions of the possibility of succeeding as a poet, and even by poetry mending in some degree fortunes on which all common industrial exertions seemed to be thrown away? And it may be asked, if it be quite possible for any man, in whatever circumstances, to possess the power of pouring forth such verses as those of the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, without some consciousness that he can command the attention of his fellow-creatures? Scarcely, we suspect. And, indeed, he himself tells us, that by weighing himself against others, he had come to as great confidence in the merit of his poems before their publication, as he ever had afterwards when they had received the stamp of public approbation. We, therefore, deem it more than merely likely, that before the end of this year the notion of publishing had come upon Burns, and that he began accordingly to exert himself vigorously in the composition of poems not strictly, as for the most part hitherto, occasional. 'Holding the plough,' we are told by Gilbert, 'was a favourite situation with Robert for poetic composition, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise.' The ploughing for winter-wheat began in November, and Burns had then, of course, an opportunity of subjecting himself to the stimulus so favourable to his Muse. That he took due advantage of it, or was very soon after at least engaged in composing some of his most important poems, appears from a letter which he addressed in February 1786 to his young friend John Richmond. On the strength of this information, and from other circumstances, we set down as the composition of the latter autumn and early winter the following brilliant series of compositions:—*To a Mouse, Halloween, Man was made to Mourn, The Cotter's Saturday Night, Address to the Deil, The Jolly Beggars, To James Smith, The Vision, The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer, The Twa Dogs, The Ordination,* and *Scotch Drink*—being, in fact, the principal basis of the fame which the bard subsequently attained. Such an amount of literary industry is uncommon with all; it was unprecedented in Burns, whose previous verses were usually prompted by the passion or whim of the hour. But now, if our theory is correct, the bard of Mossgiel had an end in view for his writings. That such was indeed the case—though hitherto it does not appear in his biography—is in a manner affirmed by his

confidant, Gilbert, who expressly says, that '*The Twa Dogs* was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken.' *The Twa Dogs*, we see, was executed before February 17, 1786, a date some considerable time anterior to that at which the resolution of publishing is usually said to have been formed.

Some interest must necessarily attach to the personal circumstances of Burns at the time when he was pouring forth these immortal lays. Sir William Allan has, with poetical feeling, painted the peasant-bard seated at study, in his ordinary working-attire, and with a pen in his hand: he represents him sitting in a roomy apartment, where many articles customarily seen in a comfortable farmhouse are scattered about. The conception of the scene appears sufficiently humble; but I am assured that it greatly exceeds the reality in point of dignity.

The farmhouse of Mossgiel, which still exists nearly as in the days of the poet, consists mainly of a kitchen and parlour, both containing several beds. Almost the only other apartment in the house is a kind of garret-closet, accessible by a narrow trap-stair ascending from the lobby. This little room is sufficiently lighted by a window of four small panes, set in the sloping roof by which the internal space is contracted fully a third. Mrs Begg relates that her two brothers occupied a small curtainless bed in this apartment. Under the window, the poet had a little deal-table, in which there was a drawer. It was here he transcribed the verses which for the most part he had composed in the fields. Often did his youngest sister steal up, after he had gone out to his afternoon labour, to search the drawer for the verses he had just written off. One cannot but take a pleasure in such particulars, as shewing in so striking a light the independence of the spirit of man on the humble or trivial circumstances by which its earthly tabernacle may be surrounded.

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING UP HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER 1785.

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
Oh what a panic 's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa' sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle! — hasty clatter
I wad be laith to rin and chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring pattle![1]

[1] The stick used for clearing away the clods from the plough.

I 'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
And justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earthborn companion,
And fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve; sometimes
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave[1]
'S a sma' request:
I 'll get a blessin' wi' the laive, rest
And never miss 't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!
And naething now to big a new ane build
O' foggage green,
And bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell and keen! sharp

Thou saw the fields laid bare and waste,
And weary winter comin' fast,
And cozie here, beneath the blast, comfortable
Thou thought to dwell,
Till, crash! the cruel coulter passed
Out through thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves and stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou 's turned out for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald, Without—hold
To thole the winter's sleety dribble, endure
And cranreuch cauld! hoar-frost

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o' mice and men,
Gang aft a-gley,
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
And forward, though I canna see,
I guess and fear.

[1] An occasional ear of corn in a thrave—that is, twenty-four sheaves.

We have the testimony of Gilbert Burns that this beautiful poem was composed while the author was following the plough. Burns ploughed with four horses, being twice the amount of power now required on most of the soils of Scotland. He required an assistant called a *gaudsman*, to drive the horses, his own duty being to hold and guide the plough. John Blane, who had acted as gaudsman to Burns, and who lived sixty years afterwards, had a distinct recollection of the turning up of the mouse. Like a thoughtless youth as he was, he ran after the creature to kill it, but was checked and recalled by his master, who, he observed, became thereafter thoughtful and abstracted. Burns, who treated his servants with the familiarity of fellow-labourers, soon after read the poem to Blane.

HALLOWEEN.[1]

The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added, to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night, so big with prophecy to the peasantry in the west of Scotland. The passion of prying into futurity, makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such should honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it among the more unenlightened in our own.

'Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art.'
GOLDSMITH.—*B.*

Upon that night, when fairies light,
On Cassilis Downans[2] dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze, fields
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the Cove[3] to stray and rove
Amang the rocks and streams
To sport that night.

[1] [All Hallow Eve, or the eve of All Saints' Day,] is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings, are all abroad on their baneful midnight errands; particularly those aërial people, the fairies, are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary.—*B.*

[2] Certain little romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.—*B.*

[3] A noted cavern near Colean House, called the Cove of Colean; which, as well as Cassilis Downans, is famed in country story for being a favourite haunt of fairies.—*B.*

Amang the bonnie, winding banks,
  Where Doon rins, wimplin', clear, wheeling
Where Bruce[1] ance ruled the martial ranks,
  And shook his Carrick spear,
Some merry, friendly, country-folks
  Together did convene,
To burn their nits, and pou their stocks, pull
  And haud their Halloween hold
    Fu' blithe that night.

The lasses feat, and cleanly neat, trim
  Mair braw than when they 're fine;
Their faces blithe, fu' sweetly kythe, shew
  Hearts leal, and warm, and kin': true
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs spruce
  Weel knotted on their garten,
Some unco blate, and some wi' gabs bashful—talk
  Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'
    Whiles fast at night.

Then, first and foremost, through the kail, cabbage
  Their stocks[2] maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, and graip, and wale, close—grope—choose
  For muckle anes and straught anes.
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift, fool
  And wandered through the bow-kail.
And pou't, for want o' better shift,
  A runt was like a sow-tail,
    Sae bow't that night. crooked

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
  They roar and cry a' throu'ther;
The very wee things, todlin', rin tottering
  Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther:
And gif the custoc 's sweet or sour,
  Wi' joctelegs they taste them; knives
Syne cozily aboon the door, comfortably
  Wi' cannie care, they 've placed them gentle
    To lie that night.

[1] The famous family of that name, the ancestors of Robert, the great deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.—*B.*

[2] The first ceremony of Halloween is, pulling each a stock, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any yird or earth stick to the root, that is tocher or fortune; and the taste of the custoc—that is, the heart of the stem—is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or, to give them their ordinary appellation, the runts, are placed somewhere above the head of the door, and the Christian names of people whom chance brings into the house are, according to the priority of placing the runts, the names in question.—*B.*

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a' — stole
  To pou their stalks o' corn;[1]
But Rab slips out, and jinks about,
  Behint the muckle thorn:
He grippet Nelly hard and fast;
  Loud skirled a' the lasses; — screamed
But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
  When kuittlin' in the fause-house[2]
    Wi' him that night.

The auld guidwife's weel-hoordit nits[3]
  Are round and round divided;
And mony lads' and lasses' fates
  Are there that night decided:
Some kindle couthie, side by side, — agreeably
  And burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa' wi' saucy pride,
  And jump out-owre the chimlie
    Fu' high that night.

Jean slips in twa wi' tentie e'e;
  Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
But this is Jock, and this is me,
  She says in to hersel':
He bleezed owre her, and she owre him,
  As they wad never mair part;
Till, fuff! he started up the lum,
  And Jean had e'en a sair heart
    To see 't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,
  Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie;
And Mary, nae doubt, took the drunt, — pet
  To be compared to Willie.
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling,
  And her ain fit it brunt it;
While Willie lap, and swore, by jing,
  'Twas just the way he wanted
    To be that night.

[1] They go to the barn-yard, and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the top-pickle—that is, the grain at the top of the stalk—the party in question will not continue spotless until marriage.—*B.*

[2] When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c., makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a fause-house.—*B.* That is, false-house; something only resembling a house.

[3] Burning the nuts is a famous charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut as they lay them in the fire, and accordingly as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.—*B.*

Nell had the fause-house in her min',
  She pits hersel' and Rob in;
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
  Till white in ase they 're sobbin'.
Nell's heart was dancin' at the view,
  She whispered Rob to leuk for 't:
Rob, stowlins, prie'd her bonny mou' — stealthily kissed
  Fu' cozie in the neuk for 't, — snugly
    Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
  Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin' at their cracks, — conversing
  And slips out by hersel':
She through the yard the nearest taks,
  And to the kiln she goes then,
And darklins graipit for the bauks, — cross-beams
  And in the blue-clue[1] throws then,
    Right fear't that night.

And aye she win't, and aye she swat, — winded
  I wat she made nae jaukin'; — dallying
Till something held within the pat,
  Guid L—! but she was quakin'!
But whether 'twas the deil himsel',
  Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
  She did na wait on talkin'
    To spier that night. — inquire

Wee Jenny to her granny says:
  'Will ye go wi' me, granny?
I 'll eat the apple[2] at the glass
  I gat frae Uncle Johnny:'
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt — smoke
  In wrath she was sae vap'rin',
She notic't na, an aizle brunt — cinder
  Her braw new worset apron
    Out through that night.

[1] Whoever would with success try this spell, must strictly observe these directions:—Steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and, darkling, throw into the pot a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a clue off the old one, and towards the latter end something will hold the thread; demand 'Wha hands?'—that is, Who holds? An answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the Christian and surname of your future spouse.—*B.*

[2] Take a candle, and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and, some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion to be, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.—*B.*

'Ye little skelpie-limmer's face![1]
I daur you try sic sportin',
As seek the foul thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune: tell
Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For mony a ane has gotten a fright,
And lived and died deleeret
On sic a night.

'Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor—
I mind 't as weel 's yestreen,
I was a gilpey then, I 'm sure young girl
I was na past fifteen:
The simmer had been cauld and wat,
And stuff was unco green;
And aye a rantin' kirn we gat harvest-home
And just on Halloween
It fell that night.

'Our stibble-rig[2] was Rab M'Graen,
A clever, sturdy fallow:
His sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
That lived in Achmacalla:
He gat hemp-seed,[3] I mind it weel,
And he made unco light o 't;
But mony a day was by himsel',
He was sae sairly frighted
That very night.'

Then up gat fechtin' Jamie Fleck,
And he swore by his conscience,
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense.
The auld guidman raught down the pock, reached
And out a handfu' gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,
Some time when nae ane see'd him,
And try 't that night.

[1] A technical term in female scolding.—*Burns's Glossary.*

[2] The leader of the reapers.

[3] Steal out, unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed, harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat now and then: 'Hemp-seed I saw thee, hemp-seed I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true love, come after me and pou thee.' Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say: 'Come after me, and shaw thee'—that is, shew thyself; in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say: 'Come after me, and harrow thee.'—*B.*

He marches through amang the stacks,
  Though he was something sturtin; timorous
The graip he for a harrow taks, dung-fork
  And haurls at his curpin; drags—rear
And every now and then he says:
  'Hemp-seed, I saw thee,
And her that is to be my lass,
  Come after me, and draw thee
    As fast this night.'

He whistled up Lord Lennox' march,
  To keep his courage cheery;
Although his hair began to arch,
  He was sae fley'd and eerie: frightened
Till presently he hears a squeak,
  And then a grane and gruntle;
He by his shouther ga'e a keek,
  And tumbled wi' a wintle stagger
    Out-owre that night.

He roared a horrid murder-shout,
  In dreadfu' desperation!
And young and auld cam rinnin' out,
  And hear the sad narration:
He swore 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw, halting
  Or crouchie Merran Humphie, crook-backed
Till, stop—she trotted through them a'—
  And wha was it but Grumphie the pig
    Asteer that night!

Meg fain wad to the barn hae gaen,
  To win three wechts o' naething;[1] corn-baskets
But for to meet the deil her lane,
  She pat but little faith in:
She gies the herd a pickle nits, few
  And twa red-cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the barn she sets,
  In hopes to see Tam Kipples
    That very night.

[1] This charm must likewise be performed unperceived, and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges if possible; for there is danger that the being about to appear may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country dialect, we call a wecht, and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third time an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.—*B.*

She turns the key wi' canny thraw, gentle
  And owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawny gies a ca',
  Syne bauldly in she enters:
A ratton rattled up the wa',
  And she cried, 'L—, preserve her!'
And ran through midden-hole and a',
  And prayed wi' zeal and fervour,
    Fu' fast that night.

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice; urged
  They hecht him some fine braw ane; promised
It chanced, the stack he faddom't thrice,[1]
  Was timmer-propt for thrawin';
He taks a swirly auld moss oak knotty
  For some black, grousome carlin; odious-looking
And loot a winze, and drew a stroke, oath
  Till skin in blypes cam haurlin' shreds
    Aff's nieves that night. hands

A wanton widow Leezie was,
  As canty as a kittlin;
But, och! that night, amang the shaws, woods
  She got a fearfu' settlin'!
She through the whins, and by the cairn, gorse
  And owre the hill gaed scrieven,
Where three lairds' lands meet at a burn,[2]
  To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
    Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
  As through the glen it wimpl't; wheeled
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays; cliff
  Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't; eddy
Whyles glittered to the nightly rays,
  Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
  Below the spreading hazel,
    Unseen that night.

[1] Take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a bean-stack, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.—*B.*

[2] You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south running spring or rivulet, where 'three lairds' lands meet,' and dip your left shirt-sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake, and sometime near midnight an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.—*B.*

Amang the brackens, on the brae, — fern
  Between her and the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
  Gat up and gae a croon: — moan
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool; — sheath
  Near lav'rock-height she jumpit, — lark
But mist a fit, and in the pool
  Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
    Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
  The luggies three[1] are ranged,
And every time great care is ta'en
  To see them duly changed:
Auld Uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
  Sin' Mar's year[2] did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice — empty
  He heaved them on the fire
    In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, and friendly cracks,
  I wat they did na weary;
And unco tales, and funny jokes,
  Their sports were cheap and cheery;
Till buttered so'ns,[3] wi' fragrant lunt, — smoke
  Set a' their gabs a-steerin'; — mouths
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt, — spirits
  They parted aff careerin'
    Fu' blithe that night.[4]

[1] Take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in another, leave the third empty; blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand—if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.—*B.*

[2] The year 1715, when the Earl of Mar raised an insurrection in Scotland.

[3] Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the Halloween supper.—*B.*

[4] The most of the ceremonies appropriate to Halloween, including all those of an adventurous character, are now disused. Meetings of young people still take place on that evening, both in country and town, but their frolics are usually limited to ducking for apples in tubs of water—a ceremony overlooked by Burns—the lottery of the dishes, and pulling cabbage-stalks. The other ceremonies are discountenanced as more superstitious than is desirable, and somewhat dangerous. So lately as 1802, the following incident took place in Edinburgh on All-Hallow Eve:—A girl named Isobel Carr, servant to Mr Matthewson, typefounder, being determined to go through the rite of sowing hemp-seed, went for that purpose into her master's foundry about ten o'clock at night, having a light in her hand, which she placed on one of the tables while she performed her incantations. She walked through the shop several times,

Mr John Mayne, a comparatively obscure follower of the Scottish Muses, had attempted a poem on the subject of Halloween, forming twelve stanzas. It appeared in *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine,* November 1780, and therefore may have been seen by Burns. That the Ayrshire poet actually saw and improved upon this composition can scarcely be doubted, after reading the following specimens:—

* * * *

'Ranged round a bleezing ingle-side,
Where nowther cauld nor hunger bide,
The farmer's house, wi' secret pride,
Will a' convene * * *

Placed at their head the guidwife sits,
And deals round apples, pears, and nits,
Syne tells her guests how, at sic bits,
Where she has been,
Bogles hae gart folk tyne their wits lose
At Halloween.

* * * *

A' things prepared in order due,
Gosh guide 's! what fearfu' pranks ensue!
Some i' the kiln-pat thraw a clue,
At whilk, bedeen,
Their sweethearts at the far-end pu',
At Halloween.

* * * *

But 'twere a langsome tale to tell
The gates o' ilka charm and spell;
Ance gaun to saw hemp-seed himsel',
Puir Jock M'Lean
Plump in a filthy peat-pot fell,
At Halloween.

---

pronouncing aloud the words used on such occasions; and so anxious was she to *see something,* as she termed it, that—having seen nothing—she gathered up the hemp-seed to sow it a second time. In the course of the second sowing, according to her own account, a tall meagre figure presented itself to her imagination! She shrieked aloud, and ran immediately into the house. After relating what she had seen, she went to bed, placing the Bible under her head! She rose next morning, and went through the labours of the day in apparent good health; but in the evening seemed somewhat timid. She went to bed without any symptoms of fear. Next morning she was called, but did not answer. A daughter of Mr Matthewson's then rose, went to her, and found that she was very sick, and that she had been so during part of the night. Tea was ordered for her, but before it could be prepared, she was seized with a stupor; the pulse became sunk, the breathing difficult, and the hands swollen and blackish. A medical gentleman was instantly called; he said it was an attack of apoplexy, which she could not survive more than ten minutes; and in rather less than that time she expired. The surgeon was clearly of opinion that the impression made on her imagination by the fancied apparition was the cause of this fatal catastrophe.

Half-felled wi' fear, and drookit weel, drenched
He frae the mire dought hardly spiel; climb
But frae that time the silly chiel
Did never grien long
To cast his cantrips wi' the Deil,
At Halloween.'

* * * *

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

AULD NEIBOR,

I 'm three times doubly o'er your debtor,
For your auld-farrant, frien'ly letter; sensible
Though I maun say 't, I doubt ye flatter,
Ye speak sae fair,
For my puir, silly, rhymin' clatter
Some less maun sair. serve

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;
Lang may your elbock jink and diddle,
To cheer you through the weary widdle
O' war'ly cares,
Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle caress
Your auld gray hairs.

But, Davie lad, I 'm red ye 're glaikit; told—inattentive
I 'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit;
And gif it 's sae, ye sud be licket, beaten
Until ye fyke; shrug
Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faiket, spared
Be hain't wha like. saved

For me, I 'm on Parnassus' brink,
Rivin' the words to gar them clink; make
Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink,
Wi' jads or masons;
And whyles, but aye owre late, I think,
Braw sober lessons.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the bardie clan;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin' clink,
The devil-hae't, that I sud ban,
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin',
Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin';
But just the pouchie put the nieve in, fist
And while ought 's there,
Then hiltie skiltie, we gae scrievin',
And fash nae mair. trouble

Leeze me on rhyme! it 's aye a treasure,
My chief, amaist my only pleasure,
At hame, a-fiel', at wark, or leisure;
The Muse, poor hizzie!
Though rough and raploch be her measure, coarse
She 's seldom lazy.

Haud to the Muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl' may play you monie a shavie;
But for the Muse, she 'll never leave ye,
Though e'er sae puir,
Na, even though limpin' wi' the spavie
Frae door to door.

THE BRAES O' BALLOCHMYLE.[1]

The Catrine woods were yellow seen,
The flowers decayed on Catrine lea,
Nae lav'rock sang on hillock green,
But Nature sickened on the ee.
Through faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel' in beauty's bloom the while,
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang,
Fareweel the Braes o' Ballochmyle!

Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye 'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in with'ring bowers,
Again ye 'll charm the vocal air.
But here, alas! for me nae mair
Shall birdie charm, or flow'ret smile;
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr,
Fareweel, fareweel! sweet Ballochmyle!

'Several of the poems,' says Gilbert Burns, 'were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the

[1] Composed on the amiable and excellent family of Whitefoord's leaving Ballochmyle, when Sir John's misfortunes obliged him to sell the estate.—*B.* Maria was Miss Whitefoord, afterwards Mrs Cranstoun.

author. He used to remark to me, that he could not well conceive a more mortifying picture of human life than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy *Man was made to Mourn* was composed.'

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

A DIRGE.

When chill November's surly blast
  Made fields and forests bare,
One evening, as I wandered forth
  Along the banks of Ayr,
I spied a man whose aged step
  Seemed weary, worn with care;
His face was furrowed o'er with years,
  And hoary was his hair.

'Young stranger, whither wanderest thou?'
  Began the reverend sage:
'Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
  Or youthful pleasures rage!
Or haply, prest with cares and woes,
  Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
  The miseries of man.

'The sun that overhangs yon moors,
  Outspreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
  A haughty lordling's pride:
I've seen yon weary winter-sun
  Twice forty times return,
And every time has added proofs
  That man was made to mourn.

'Oh, man! while in thy early years,
  How prodigal of time;
Misspending all thy precious hours,
  Thy glorious youthful prime!
Alternate follies take the sway;
  Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives Nature's law,
  That man was made to mourn.

'Look not alone on youthful prime,
  Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
  Supported is his right:

But see him on the edge of life,
  With cares and sorrows worn;
Then Age and Want—oh ill-matched pair!—
  Shew man was made to mourn.

'A few seem favourites of fate,
  In Pleasure's lap carest;
Yet think not all the rich and great
  Are likewise truly blest.
But, oh! what crowds in every land,
  All wretched and forlorn!
Through weary life this lesson learn—
  That man was made to mourn.

'Many and sharp the numerous ills
  Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves
  Regret, remorse, and shame;
And man, whose heaven-erected face
  The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
  Makes countless thousands mourn!

'See yonder poor, o'erlaboured wight,
  So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
  To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
  The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
  And helpless offspring mourn.

'If I'm designed yon lordling's slave—
  By Nature's law designed—
Why was an independent wish
  E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
  His cruelty or scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
  To make his fellow mourn?

'Yet let not this too much, my son,
  Disturb thy youthful breast;
This partial view of human-kind
  Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressed, honest man,
  Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
  To comfort those that mourn!

'Oh, Death! the poor man's dearest friend—
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour, my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn!
But, oh! a blest relief to those
That weary-laden mourn!'

The metrical structure, and some other features of this poem, may be traced to an old stall-ballad, entitled the *Life and Age of Man*, which Mr Cromek recovered, and which opens thus:—

'Upon the sixteen hunder year
Of God and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie;
On January the sixteenth day,
As I did ly alone,
With many a sigh and sob did say,
Ah! man is made to moan.'

Burns, in a letter to Mrs Dunlop, says: 'I had an old grand-uncle with whom my mother lived while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died; during which time, his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of the *Life and Age of Man*.'

It would be the wildest injustice to Burns to suppose that even now, when so eager to satirise the more zealous professors of religion in his district, he was himself indifferent on that subject. We see an expression of devout adherence to true religion and undefiled in his letter to Mr M'Math in September. In October, he makes a final entry in his first Commonplace-book as follows:—

October 1785.

If ever any young man, in the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eye over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations, as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil's dear-bought experience. I have literally, like that great poet and great gallant, and, by consequence, that great fool, Solomon, 'turned my eyes to behold madness and folly.' Nay, I have, with all the ardour of lively, fanciful, and whimsical imagination, accompanied with a warm, feeling, poetic heart, shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

In the first place, let my pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity. * * *

The observations are thus broken off—very characteristically; but it is something that the only one he had entered signifies that the poet was a devout man amidst all his errors. In his earlier

years, his father had shone before his family in that priestly character which presents Scottish humble life in one of its most beautiful aspects. Robert had begun, some time before the old man's death, to take a part in the family devotions, reading 'the chapter' and giving out the psalm. After the death of William Burness, it fell to the poet by right of ancient custom, he being the eldest born, to take on himself the whole function of the family-priest, and he conducted the cottage-worship every night when at home during the whole time of his residence at Mossgiel. More than this, his sister and another surviving member of the household speak in the warmest terms of the style of his prayers. The latter individual[1] states, that he has never since listened to anything equal to these addresses. These facts, it will be admitted, form an interesting prelude to the beautiful poem in which Burns has placed in everlasting remembrance this phase of the rustic life of Scotland. Gilbert Burns gives us an account of what immediately prompted his brother to compose this immortal work. 'He had frequently,' says Gilbert, 'remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase "Let us worship God," used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family-worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the *Cotter's Saturday Night*.' It needs only further to be remarked, that the poet found a model in one of the best poems of his predecessor Fergusson, entitled *The Farmer's Ingle*.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.[2]

'Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.'—GRAY.

My loved, my honoured, much-respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end:
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise.
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequestered scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! though his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween!

[1] Mr William Ronald, now a farmer in the neighbourhood of Beith, in Ayrshire (1854).
[2] Probably the first verse and inscription to Mr Aiken were added afterwards.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh; noise
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh:
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn cotter frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.[1]

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee things, toddlin', stacher through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise and glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinking bonnily,
His clean hearthstane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile, anxiety
And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in, By and by
At service out, amang the farmers roun':
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neibor town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposit her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeigned, brothers and sisters meet,
And each for other's weelfare kindly spiers: inquires
The social hours, swift-winged, unnoticed fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears; news
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother, wi' her needle and her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel 's the new—
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

[1] The opening verse of *The Farmer's Ingle* bears a considerable resemblance to this:—

'Whan gloamin' gray out-owre the welkin keeks,
Whan Bawtie ca's the owsen to the byre,
Whan Thrasher John, sair dung, his barn-door steeks, jaded—shuts
Whan lusty lasses at the dighting tire: winnowing
What bangs fu' leal the e'ening's coming cauld, beats—truly
And gars snaw-tappit winter freeze in vain; makes
Gars dowie mortals look baith blithe and bauld,
Nor fleyed wi' a' the puirtith o' the plain; frightened
Begin, my Muse, and chant in hameiy strain.'

Their master's and their mistress's command,
The younkers a' are warnèd to obey;
And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand, diligent
And ne'er, though out o' sight, to jauk or play: dally
'And oh! be sure to fear the Lord alway!
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!'

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neibor lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek,
With heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleased the mother hears it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
A strappin' youth; he taks the mother's eye;
Blithe Jenny sees the visit's no ill-ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate and lathefu', scarce can weel behave; bashful—hesitating
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave:
Weel pleased to think her bairn's respected like the lave. other people

Oh happy love!—where love like this is found!
Oh heartfelt raptures!—bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare:
'If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale.'

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exiled?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruined maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
  The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food; porridge
The soupe their only hawkie does afford, cow
  That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood: porch
  The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell, cheese—biting
  And aft he 's prest, and aft he ca's it guid;
  The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell. twelvemonth

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
  They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
  The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;
  His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare; gray temples
  Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care; selects
And 'Let us worship GOD!' he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
  They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild-warbling measures rise,
  Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name,
  Or noble *Elgin* beets the heavenward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
  Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickled ear no heartfelt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page—
  How Abram was the friend of GOD on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
  With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
  Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
  Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme—
  How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed:
How HE, who bore in heaven the second name,
  Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:
  How his first followers and servants sped,
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
  How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'[1]
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!
The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But, haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;
And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That HE, who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
'An honest man's the noblest work of God;'
And certes, in fair Virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

Oh Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And oh! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

[1] Pope's *Windsor Forest.*—*B.*

Oh Thou! who poured the patriotic tide,
That streamed through Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
Oh never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

The *Address to the Deil* appears to have been produced in early winter, probably before the month of November had expired. Gilbert recollected his brother repeating the poem to him as they were going together with their carts to bring coal for the family fire. 'The curious idea of such an address was,' he says, 'suggested to him by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage.' The poem has been a theme of unmingled praise with all the critics of Burns. As a serio-comic embodiment of popular superstitions, it is unrivalled, and the relenting tenderness of the final stanza is a stroke which could have come from scarcely any other poet.

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

Oh Prince! oh chief of many throned powers,
That led th' embattled seraphim to war.—MILTON.

Oh thou! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,[1]
Wha in yon cavern grim and sootie,
Closed under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,[2]
To scaud poor wretches!

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
And let poor d—d bodies be;
I 'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a deil,
To skelp and scaud poor dogs like me,
And hear us squeel!

[1] A Scotch appellative of Satan, from his cloven feet or *cloots*.

[2] Burns here imagines a foot-pail, called in Scotland a *cootie*, as employed by Satan in distributing brimstone over the unfortunates under his care.

Great is thy power, and great thy fame;
Far kenned and noted is thy name;
And though yon lowin' heugh 's thy hame, hollow
Thou travels far;
And, faith! thou 's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur. apt to be scared

Whyles, ranging like a roaring lion,
For prey a' holes and corners tryin';
Whyles on the strong-winged tempest flyin',
Tirlin' the kirks; Uncovering
Whyles in the human bosom pryin',
Unseen thou lurks.

I 've heard my reverend grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld ruined castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wanderer's way
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my grannie summon,
To say her prayers, douce honest woman!
Aft yont the dike she 's heard you bummin',
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin', through the boortrees comin', elder-trees
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter-night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin' light,
Wi' you, mysel', I gat a fright
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
Wi' waving sough.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake, fist
Each bristled hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch, stoor quaick—quaick— frightful
Amang the springs,
Awa' ye squattered, like a drake,
On whistling wings.

Let warlocks grim, and withered hags,
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs and dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues
Owre howkit dead. excavated

Thence countra wives, wi' toil and pain,
May plunge and plunge the kirn in vain;
For, oh! the yellow treasure 's ta'en
By witching skill;
And dawtit, twal-pint Hawkie 's gaen — petted
As yell 's the bill. — milkless

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse,
On young guidmen, fond, keen, and crouse,
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantrip wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,
And float the jinglin' icy boord,
Then water-kelpies haunt the foord,
By your direction;
And 'nighted travellers are allured
To their destruction.

And aft your moss-traversing spunkies
Decoy the wight that late and drunk is:
The bleezin', curst, mischievous monkeys
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When mason's mystic word and grip,
In storms and tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest brother ye wad whip
Aff straught to h—!

Lang syne, in Eden's bonny yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were paired,
And all the soul of love they shared,
The raptured hour,
Sweet on the fragrant flowery swaird,
In shady bower.[1]

[1] This verse ran originally as follows:—

Lang syne, in Eden's happy scene,
When strappin' Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonnie Jean,
My dearest part,
A dancin', sweet, young handsome quean,
O' guileless heart.

Then you, ye auld sneck-drawing dog![1]
Ye came to Paradise incog.
And played on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa'!)
And gied the infant warld a shog, shake
'Maist ruined a'.

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz, bustle
Wi' reekit duds, and reestit gizz, smoked clothes—withered hair
Ye did present your smootie phiz dirty
'Mang better folk,
And sklented on the man of Uzz glanced
Your spitefu' joke?

And how ye gat him i' your thrall,
And brak him out o' house and hall,
While scabs and blotches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw,
And lows'd his ill-tongued, wicked scawl, scolding wife
Was warst ava?

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares and fechtin' fierce,
Sin' that day Michael did you pierce,
Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse,
In prose or rhyme.

And now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin',
A certain bardie's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him linkin'
To your black pit;
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin',
And cheat you yet.

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought and men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake—
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Even for your sake!

Something should have been said before regarding the scenes and persons amongst which Burns was living at this crisis. In 1833, after a visit to Mauchline for the purpose of making

[1] 'Sneck-drawing dog' expresses a stealthy, insidious person, who opens doors by drawing the *sneck* or latch unheard.

inquiries regarding the Mossgiel poet, the editor wrote as follows:—

'Mauchline is a parish town of above a thousand inhabitants, in ancient times the seat of a priory belonging to Melrose, but now differing in no respect from a common agricultural village. It is situated upon a slope ascending from the margin of the Ayr, from which it is about two miles distant. One might at first suppose that a rustic population like that of Mauchline would form but a poor field for the descriptive and satirical genius of Burns. It is wonderful, however, how variously original many of the inhabitants of the most ordinary Scottish village will contrive to be. Human nature may be studied everywhere; and perhaps it nowhere assumes so many strikingly distinct forms as in a small cluster of men, such as is to be found in a town of a thousand inhabitants. In such a place every individual luxuriates in his own particular direction, till the whole become as well individualised as the objects of inanimate nature; while in a city the individual is lost in the mass, and no one is greatly different from another. In a small town, the character of every man is well known, so that everything he says and does is felt as characteristic, and enjoyed accordingly. One is a wag, another is a miser, a third exaggerates all he has to relate, a fourth (but this is apt to be less of a distinction) is overinclined to strong waters. Every one is more or less a humorist, and, as such, affords a perpetual fund of amusement to his compeers. If Shakspeare could draw lively delineations of human character from such persons as the originals of Silence and Shallow, it may well be conceived that a genius like Burns must have seen as good subjects in many of the villagers of Mauchline. To give an idea of the taste for wit and humour which might exist in such a scene as this, we may quote what was said by a shopkeeper named D——, when on his death-bed, in reference to a person who had been to him and all the other inhabitants as the very sun and soul of fun for many years, and was recently deceased. Even in this melancholy condition, D—— said he accounted it no small consolation to reflect that he had *lived in the same days with John Weir*. The mind of the honest trader might no doubt have been filled with more fitting reflections at such a time; but it is impossible to doubt that it was from such escapes of natural character that the very happiest touches of both Shakspeare and Burns were derived.[1]

[1] John Weir was the father of Sergeant Weir, whose name has obtained a place in history, in consequence of specially gallant achievements at Waterloo.

'Let us for a moment review the village as it was in external and moral respects in the days of Burns. First, in a central situation, stood its old barn-like church, surrounded by a burial-ground, full, as usual, of flat and upright monuments—the scene of those prelections which the poet has described in his *Holy Fair*. Close by are the remains of the ancient priory, consisting of little besides an old dismantled tower, beside which was planted the neat mansion of Gavin Hamilton the writer. He is a pleasant-natured man, with a young family rising around him. In his little business-room will be found one or two young scapegrace clerks, great cronies of Burns; one of them his correspondent, John Richmond. If you take your stand in the kirk-yard, you see into Gavin's garden in one direction; in another, you see the back of Nanse Tinnock's change-house—the resort of yill-caup commentators during intervals of sermon, and the place in which Burns offered to drink the premier's health nine times a week, provided he would save aqua-vitæ from fiscal oppression. Nanse is a true ale-wife—quiet, civil, discreet, and no tale-teller. She would not blab even about Burns, but insisted to the end of her life that he had indulged very little in her house. In another direction, opposite the principal entrance to the church-yard, runs off a street called the Cowgate, in which Jeanie Armour lives. Here we see facing us a little white-faced inn of two stories—the Whitefoord Arms—kept by one John Dove or Dow; perhaps a greater haunt of the Mossgiel bard than Nansie's. Him Burns consigns to fame through the medium of a burlesque epitaph, no doubt presenting a tolerably just view of John's character:—

ON JOHN DOVE,

INNKEEPER, MAUCHLINE.

Here lies Johnny Pigeon;
What was his religion?
  Wha e'er desires to ken,
To some other warl'
Maun follow the carl,
  For here Johnny Pigeon had nane!

Strong ale was ablution—
Small beer persecution,
  A dram was *memento mori;*
But a full-flowing bowl
Was the joy of his soul,
  And port was celestial glory.

'In a good-looking shop in one of the streets of Mauchline, would have been found James Smith, a clever, little, dark-complexioned fellow, of bright social powers, and much sense and acuteness. To him Burns has cleaved like a brother, and many an evening do they spend together. Then, amongst the "characters," we have Poosie Nansie—a beldame who keeps a lodging-house for vagrants. She is attended by a strange girl in the relation of daughter—yclept Racer Jess—who has run races for wagers, and is sometimes employed, on account of her speed of foot, in carrying messages throughout the country. Burns, Smith, and Richmond, are not above enjoying the odd scenes presented in Poosie Nansie's hotel, where wretches passing before the world for maimed and blind, recover the use of limbs and senses, and compensate in a hearty supper for all the privations and contumelies which they suffer in their exoteric character by day. Wild intemperance and frantic merriment, mingled with frightful quarrels and broils, distinguish this scene of low life—which, nevertheless, is a scene not below the regard of one who finds a human heart beating even in the worst of his kind. Holy Willie, too, we may be sure, supplies in his canting language and sordid overreaching habits abundant matter of remark to Burns and his friends. There is a zealot of a different stamp—James Humphry by name, a working-man, but the very type of a theological Scottish villager—a critic of sermons, a meddler with ministers, a pertinacious long-tongued disputant about texts—in short, the "noisy polemic" whom Burns has immortalised in an epitaph. He, we cannot doubt, must have afforded food for many a merry remark. The "unco guid" generally would be of course frequently canvassed in all the bearings of their characters—great joy would be felt when their decent robes gave way in aught, shewing the unclean heart beneath. The more notedly self-indulgent, who only kept up a tolerable face of decency before society, if more mildly treated, would at least supply abundant themes of grotesque narration. Such the place, and such the persons, now forming the drama of life in which the poet moved, himself a phenomenon of no common kind, a subject of terror and aversion to many, on account of his imputed "wildness" and latitudinarianism, while with others he was as much an object of affection and admiration because of his generous heart, his immense powers of wit, and the wonderful productions of his Muse.'

This imperfect sketch may serve as generally introductory to

his poems, *The Jolly Beggars, The Epistle to James Smith, The Holy Fair,* and some others.

THE JOLLY BEGGARS:

A CANTATA.

RECITATIVO.

When lyart leaves bestrew the yird, — gray—earth
Or wavering like the baukie-bird, — bat
  Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi bitter skyte — impulse
And infant frosts begin to bite,
  In hoary cranreuch drest; — hoar-frost
Ae night at e'en a merry core
  O' randie, gangrel bodies, — vagrant
In Poosie Nansie's held the splore, — merry-meeting
  To drink their orra duddies: — odd
    Wi' quaffing and laughing,
      They ranted and they sang;
    Wi' jumping and thumping,
      The vera girdle[1] rang.

First, niest the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel braced wi' mealy bags,
  And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae and blankets warm—
  She blinket on her sodger:
And aye he gies the tozie drab — tipsy
  The tither skelpin' kiss,
While she held up her greedy gab
  Just like an aumos dish.[2]
    Ilk smack still, did crack still,
      Just like a cadger's[3] whip,
    Then staggering and swaggering,
      He roared this ditty up.

[1] An iron plate, used in Scottish cottages for baking cakes over the fire.

[2] The Scottish beggars used to carry a large wooden dish for the reception of any alms which took the shape of food. The same utensil seems to have once been (if it is not so still) a part of the accoutrements of a continental beggar. When the revolted Netherlanders, in the sixteenth century, assumed the character of *Les Gueux*, or the Beggars, a beggar's *wooden cup* was one of their insignia.

[3] A *cadger* is a man who travels the country with a horse or ass, carrying two panniers loaded with various merchandise for the country-people.—CROMEK.

AIR.

TUNE—*Soldiers' Joy.*

I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars,
And shew my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

My 'prenticeship I past where my leader breathed his last,
When the bloody die was cast on the heights of Abram;[1]
I served out my trade when the gallant game was played,
And the Morro[2] low was laid at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating-batteries,[3]
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot[4] to head me,
I 'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

And now though I must beg with a wooden arm and leg,
And many a tattered rag hanging over my bum,
I 'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle and my callet,
As when I used in scarlet to follow a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

What though with hoary locks I must stand the winter shocks,
Beneath the woods and rocks oftentimes for a home,
When the t'other bag I sell, and the t'other bottle tell,
I could meet a troop of h— at the sound of a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

RECITATIVO.

He ended; and the kebars sheuk, rafters
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons backward leuk,
And seek the benmost bore; innermost

[1] The battle-ground in front of Quebec, where Wolfe fell victoriously, September 1759.

[2] El Morro, the castle which defends the entrance to the harbour of Santiago or St Jago, a small island near the southern shore of Cuba. It is situated on an eminence, the abutments being cut out of the limestone rock.—*Logan's Notes of a Tour*, &c. Edinburgh, 1838. In 1762, this castle was stormed and taken by the British, after which the Havana was surrendered, with spoil to the value of three millions.

[3] 'The destruction of the Spanish floating-batteries during the famous siege of Gibraltar in 1782—on which occasion the gallant Captain Curtis rendered the most signal service—is the heroic exploit here referred to.'—MOTHERWELL.

[4] George Augustus Elliot, created Lord Heathfield for his admirable defence of Gibraltar during a siege of three years. Born 1717, died 1790.

A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,
He skirled out 'Encore!'
But up arose the martial chuck,
And laid the loud uproar.

AIR.

TUNE—*Soldier Laddie.*

I once was a maid, though I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men;
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I 'm fond of a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church;
He ventured the soul, and I risked the body—
'Twas then I proved false to my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the peace it reduced me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair;
His rags regimental they fluttered so gaudy,
My heart it rejoiced at a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

And now I have lived—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup and a song;
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Poor Merry Andrew in the neuk,
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler hizzie; wench
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
Between themselves they were sae busy:
At length wi' drink and courting dizzy,
He stoitered up and made a face; staggered
Then turned, and laid a smack on Grizzie,
Syne tuned his pipes wi' grave grimace.

AIR.

TUNE—*Auld Sir Symon.*

Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou, drunk
  Sir Knave is a fool in a session;[1]
He's there but a 'prentice I trow,
  But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she bought me a beuk,
  And I held awa' to the school;
I fear I my talent misteuk,
  But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neck,
  A hizzie's the half o' my craft,
But what could ye other expect,
  Of ane that's avowedly daft? insane

I ance was tied up like a stirk, bullock
  For civilly swearing and quaffin';
I ance was abused in the kirk,
  For touzling a lass i' my daffin. rumpling—merriment

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,
  Let naebody name wi' a jeer;
There's even, I'm tauld, i' the court
  A tumbler ca'd the Premier.

Observed ye, yon reverend lad,
  Maks faces to tickle the mob;
He rails at our mountebank squad—
  It's rivalship just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I'll tell,
  For faith I'm confoundedly dry;
The chiel that's a fool for himsel',
  Guid L—! he's far dafter than I.

RECITATIVO.

Then niest outspak a raucle carlin, stout beldam
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterling, catch
For monie a pursie she had hooked,
And had in monie a well been ducked.
Her dove had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie! halter
Wi' sighs and sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

[1] Meaning, apparently, when under trial for some misdeed.

AIR.

TUNE—*O an' ye were dead, Guidman.*

A Highland lad my love was born,
The Lawland laws he held in scorn,
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.

CHORUS.

Sing, hey my braw John Highlandman!
Sing, ho my braw John Highlandman!
There 's not a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philabeg and tartan plaid,
And guid claymore down by his side, sword
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

We rangèd a' from Tweed to Spey,
And lived like lords and ladies gay;
For a Lawland face he fearèd none,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

They banished him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

But, oh! they catched him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast;
My curse upon them every one,
They 've hanged my braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

RECITATIVO.

A pigmy scraper, wi' his fiddle,
Wha used at trysts and fairs to driddle, play
Her strappin' limb and gaucy middle
(He reached na higher)
Had holed his heartie like a riddle,
And blawn 't on fire.

Wi' hand on haunch, and upward e'e,
He crooned his gamut, one, two, three, murmured
Then in an arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set off wi' allegretto glee
His giga solo.

AIR.

TUNE—*Whistle owre the lave o't.*

Let me ryke up to dight that tear, reach—wipe
And go wi' me and be my dear,
And then your every care and fear
May whistle owre the lave o't.

CHORUS.

I am a fiddler to my trade,
And a' the tunes that e'er I played,
The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirns and weddings we'se be there,
And oh! sae nicely's we will fare;
We'll bouse about till Daddy Care
Sings whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily the banes we'll pyke, pick
And sun oursel's about the dike,
And at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heaven o' charms,
And while I kittle hair on thairms,[1]
Hunger, cauld, and a' sic harms,
May whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird, gipsy
As weel as poor gut-scraper;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
And draws a rusty rapier—

He swore by a' was swearing worth,
To speet him like a pliver,
Unless he wad from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever.

[1] While I apply hair to catgut.

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor Tweedle-dee
  Upon his hunkers bended, hams
And prayed for grace wi' ruefu' face,
  And sae the quarrel ended.

But though his little heart did grieve
  When round the tinkler prest her,
He feigned to snirtle in his sleeve, laugh
  When thus the caird addressed her:

AIR.

TUNE—*Clout the Caudron.*

My bonny lass, I work in brass,
  A tinkler is my station:
I've travelled round all Christian ground
  In this my occupation:
I've ta'en the gold, I've been enrolled
  In many a noble squadron:
But vain they searched, when off I marched
  To go and clout the caudron. patch
        I've ta'en the gold, &c.

Despise that shrimp, that withered imp,
  Wi' a' his noise and cap'rin',
And tak a share wi' those that bear
  The budget and the apron.
And by that stoup, my faith and houp,
  And by that dear Kilbagie,[1]
If e'er you want, or meet wi' scant,
  May I ne'er weet my craigie. throat
        And by that stoup, &c.

RECITATIVO.

The caird prevailed—the unblushing fair
  In his embraces sunk,
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
  And partly she was drunk.
Sir Violino, with an air
  That shewed a man of spunk,
Wished unison between the pair,
  And made the bottle clunk
        To their health that night.

[1] A sort of whisky in high reputation, produced at a distillery of that name in Clackmannanshire.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft,
  That played a dame a shavie, trick
The fiddler raked her fore and aft,
  Ahint the chicken cavie.
Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,
  Though limping wi' the spavie,
He hirpled up, and lap like daft,
  And shored them Dainty Davie threatened
    O' boot that night.

He was a care-defying blade
  As ever Bacchus listed,
Though Fortune sair upon him laid,
  His heart she ever missed it.
He had nae wish but—to be glad,
  Nor want but—when he thirsted;
He hated nought but—to be sad,
  And thus the Muse suggested
    His sang that night.

AIR.

TUNE—*For a' that, and a' that.*

I am a bard of no regard
  Wi' gentle folks, and a' that;
But Homer-like, the glowrin' byke, staring multitude
  Frae town to town I draw that.

CHORUS.

For a' that, and a' that,
  And twice as muckle 's a' that,
I 've lost but ane, I 've twa behin',
  I 've wife eneugh for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank, pool
  Castalia's burn, and a' that;
But there it streams, and richly reams,
  My Helicon I ca' that,
    For a' that, &c.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
  Their humble slave, and a' that;
But lordly will, I hold it still
  A mortal sin to thraw that.
    For a' that, &c.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
  Wi' mutual love, and a' that;
But for how lang the flie may stang,
  Let inclination law that.
    For a' that, &c.

Their tricks and craft have put me daft,
They 've ta'en me in, and a' that;
But clear your decks, and here 's the sex;
I like the jads for a' that.

CHORUS.

For a' that, and a' that,
And twice as muckle 's a' that;
My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
They 're welcome till 't for a' that.

RECITATIVO.

So sang the bard—and Nansie's wa's
Shook with a thunder of applause,
Re-echoed from each mouth:
They toomed their pokes, and pawned their duds,
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
To quench their lowin' drouth. flaming
Then owre again, the jovial thrang,
The poet did request,
To loose his pack and wale a sang, select
A ballad o' the best;
He rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa Deborahs,
Looks round him, and found them
Impatient for the chorus.

AIR.

TUNE—*Jolly Mortals, fill your Glasses.*

See! the smoking bowl before us,
Mark our jovial ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing.

CHORUS.

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty 's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

What is title? what is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!
A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
  Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
  Hug our doxies on the hay.
    A fig, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
  Through the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
  Witness brighter scenes of love?
    A fig, &c.

Life is all a variorum,
  We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum
  Who have characters to lose.
    A fig, &c.

Here's to budgets, bags, and wallets!
  Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged brats and callets!
  One and all cry out—Amen!

A fig for those by law protected!
  Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
  Churches built to please the priest.[1]

The poem is understood to have been founded on the poet's observation of an actual scene which one night met his eye, when, in company with his friends John Richmond and James Smith, he dropped accidentally at a late hour into the humble hostelry of Mrs Gibson, more familiarly named Poosie Nansie, already referred to. After witnessing much jollity amongst a company who by day appeared abroad as miserable beggars, the three young men came away, Burns professing to have been greatly amused with the scene, but particularly with the gleesome behaviour of an old maimed soldier. In the course of a few days, he recited a part of the poem to Richmond, who used to say,

[1] 'In one or two passages of the *Jolly Beggars*, the Muse has slightly trespassed on decorum, where, in the language of Scottish song—

'High kilted was she,
As she gaed owre the lea.'

Something, however, is to be allowed to the nature of the subject, and something to the education of the poet; and if from veneration to the names of Swift and Dryden, we tolerate the grossness of the one and the indelicacy of the other, the respect due to that of Burns may surely claim indulgence for a few light strokes of broad humour.'—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

that, to the best of his recollection, it contained, in its original complete form, songs by a sweep and a sailor, which did not afterwards appear.[1]

The groundwork which we thus find that Burns had for the *Jolly Beggars*, only proves the extraordinary extent of his creative powers, deepening the regret which all must feel that he never applied himself heartily to fiction, either in poetry or prose. The poem, it may be remarked, was not a favourite with his mother and brother, and it does not appear that the poet ever contemplated giving it to the world. On the contrary, he laid it aside, and in a few years had ceased to remember its existence. On being reminded of it by Mr George Thomson in 1793, he says, in a passage hitherto unedited of the letter dated 13th September of that year: 'I have forgot the cantata you allude to, as I kept no copy, and indeed did not know of its existence; however, I remember that none of the songs pleased myself, except the last, something about—

"Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest."'

The cantata was first published in a piratical edition of the author's poems by Stewart, Glasgow, 1801.

[1] There was, after all, a kind of pattern or model for this singular composition, in a song entitled *The Merry Beggars*, which appears in *The Charmer*, 2 vols., 1751:—

MERRY BEGGARS.

1st Beggar. I once was a poet at London,
I keep my heart still full of glee;
There's no man can say that I'm undone,
For begging's no new trade to me.

2d Beg. I once was an attorney-at-law,
And after a knight of the post;
Give me a nice wench and clean straw,
And I value not who rules the roast.

3d Beg. Make room for a soldier in buff,
Who valiantly strutted about,
Till he fancied the peace breaking off,
And then he most wisely sold out.

4th Beg. Here comes a courtier polite, sir,
Who flattered my lord to his face;
Now railing is all his delight, sir,
Because he missed getting a place.

5th Beg. I still am a merry gut-scraper,
My heart never yet felt a qualm;
Though poor, I can frolic and vapour,
And sing any tune but a psalm.

6th Beg. I was a fanatical preacher,
I turned up my eyes when I prayed;
But my hearers half-starvèd their teacher,
For they believed not a word that I said.

1st Beg. Whoe'er would be merry and free,
Let him list and from us he may learn;
In palaces who shall you see
Half so happy as we in a barn?

CHORUS OF ALL.

Whoe'er would be merry, &c.

TO JAMES SMITH.

'Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of society!
I owe thee much!'—BLAIR.

Dear Smith, the slee'est, paukie thief,
That e'er attempted stealth or rief, robbery
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef spell
Owre human hearts;
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief proof
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun and moon,
And every star that blinks aboon, twinkles
Ye 've cost me twenty pair o' shoon
Just gaun to see you;
And every ither pair that 's done,
Mair ta'en I 'm wi' you.

That auld capricious carlin, Nature,
To mak amends for scrimpet stature, stinted
She 's turned you aff, a human creature
On her first plan;
And in her freaks, on every feature
She 's wrote, the Man.

Just now I 've ta'en the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle 's working prime, yeasty
My fancy yerkit up sublime fermented
Wi' hasty summon:
Hae ye a leisure moment's time,
To hear what 's comin'?

Some rhyme a neighbour's name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the country clash, gossip
And raise a din;
For me, an aim I never fash—
I rhyme for fun.

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
And d—d my fortune to the groat;
But in requit,
Has blest me wi' a random shot
O' country wit.

This while my notion 's ta'en a sklent,
To try my fate in guid black prent;
But still the mair I 'm that way bent,
Something cries 'Hoolie! Gently
I red you, honest man, tak tent! warn
Ye 'll shaw your folly.

'There 's ither poets much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had insured their debtors
A' future ages;
Now moths deform in shapeless tatters,
Their unknown pages.'

Then farewell hopes o' laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I 'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistling thrang,
And teach the lanely heights and howes
My rustic sang.

I 'll wander on, with tentless heed
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I 'll lay me with the inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we 're living sound and hale,
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave Care o'er side!
And large before Enjoyment's gale,
Let 's tak the tide.

This life, sae far 's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy-land,
Where Pleasure is the magic wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-and-forty 's speel'd,
See, crazy, weary, joyless eild,
Wi' wrinkled face,
Comes hostin', hirplin' owre the field, coughing—limping
Wi' creepin' pace.

When ance life's day draws near the gloamin', twilight
Then fareweel vacant careless roamin';
And fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',
And social noise;
And fareweel dear, deluding woman!
The joy of joys!

Oh, Life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at the expected warning,
To joy and play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves!
And though the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.[1]

Some, lucky, find a flowery spot,
For which they never toiled or swat;
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But care or pain; Without
And, haply, eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim some fortune chase;
Keen hope does every sinew brace;
Through fair, through foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey:
Then cannie, in some cozie place, quietly—snug
They close the day.

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin';
To right or left, eternal swervin'
They zigzag on;
Till curst with age, obscure and starvin',
They aften groan.

Alas! what bitter toil and straining—
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!
Is Fortune's fickle Luna waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let 's sing our sang.

[1] 'Where can we find a more exhilarating enumeration of the enjoyments of youth, contrasted with their successive extinction as age advances, than in the *Epistle to James Smith?*'—PROFESSOR WALKER.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, 'Ye Powers,' and warm implore,
'Though I should wander Terra o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Aye rowth o' rhymes. abundance

'Gie dreeping roasts to country lairds,
Till icicles hing frae their beards;
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,
And maids of honour!
And yill and whisky gie to cairds, tinkers
Until they sconner. are nauseated

'A title, Dempster[1] merits it;
A garter gie to Willie Pitt;
Gie wealth to some be-ledgered cit,
In cent. per cent.
But give me real, sterling wit,
And I'm content.

'While ye are pleased to keep me hale,
I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be't water-brose, or muslin-kail,[2]
Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang's the Muses dinna fail
To say the grace.'

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug or by my nose;
I jouk beneath Misfortune's blows stoop
As weel's I may;
Sworn foe to Sorrow, Care, and Prose,
I rhyme away.

Oh ye douce folk, that live by rule, serious
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Compared wi' you—oh fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike;
Your hearts are just a standing-pool,
Your lives a dike! wall

[1] George Dempster of Dunnichen, then a conspicuous orator in parliament, and a friend to all patriotic institutions in his native land. He commenced his parliamentary career in 1762, closed it in 1790, and died in 1818 at the age of eighty-two.

[2] Broth made without meat.

Nae hairbrained, sentimental traces,
In your unlettered nameless faces!
In arioso trills and graces
Ye never stray,
But gravissimo, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye 're wise;
Nae ferly though ye do despise — wonder
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys, — heedless
The rattling squad:
I see you upward cast your eyes—
Ye ken the road.

Whilst I—but I shall haud me there—
Wi' you I 'll scarce gang ony where—
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang,
Content with you to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.[1]

It is pretty evident from this poem, that at the time of its composition Burns had thought of publishing, but not found cause to determine him upon committing the act. He is, meanwhile, content to rhyme for the enjoyment it affords him, and to accept his gift of country wit and verse as compensation for his want of the favour of fortune. He indulges in a strain of Epicurean philosophy, which the severest censor might pardon to one condemned to hopeless toils on the leys of Mossgiel, and who actually spent half his hours in oppressive melancholy. The bounding sense of enjoyment expressed in this poem is in striking contrast to the sombre tones of *Man was made to Mourn* and the verses *To a Mouse*, probably composed about the same time.

There was, indeed, at this time a contention going on in Burns's mind between the sad consideration of his position in life and those poetical tendencies which might be interpreted as partly the cause of that position being so low. This contention we see traced in the several epistles he had written to his brother poets, Sillar, Lapraik, and Simpson, and to his friend Smith, during the course of the present year of flowing inspiration. It might have been easy for any of these individuals to see, that if Burns only

[1] Smith afterwards had a calico-printing manufactory at Avon, near Linlithgow, but proved unsuccessful. It was his fate to end life where Burns at one time expected to end *his*—in the West Indies.

could be a successful man of the world by an utter abandonment of the Muse, he never could be so at all, for he invariably ends by taking his rhyming power as a quittance of fortune. At length we have the final struggle between these two contending principles, and the triumph of the Muse, expressed in a poem of the highest strain of eloquence.

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST.[1]

The sun had closed the winter-day,
The curlers quat their roaring play,[2]
And hungered maukin ta'en her way — hare
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thrasher's weary flingin'-tree
The lee-lang day had tirèd me;
And when the day had closed his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence,[3] right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek,
I sat and eyed the spewing reek,
That filled wi' hoast-provoking smeek
The auld clay biggin';
And heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin'.

[1] *Duan*, a term of Ossian's for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his 'Cath-Loda,' vol. ii. of M'Pherson's translation.—*B.*

[2] Curling is a game nearly peculiar to the southern counties of Scotland. When strong ice can be obtained, a number of individuals, each provided with a large stone of the shape of an oblate spheroid, smoothed on the bottom, and furnished with a handle, range themselves in two sides, to play against each other. The game much resembles bowls, but is more animated, and, from its unavoidable rarity, is much more keenly enjoyed. It is well characterised as a *roaring play.*

[3] The parlour of the farmhouse of Mossgiel—its only apartment besides the kitchen—still exists nearly in the state in which it was when the poet described it as the scene of his vision of Coila. 'Though in every respect humble, and partly occupied by fixed beds, it does not appear uncomfortable. Every consideration, however, sinks beneath the one intense feeling, that here, within these four walls, warmed at this little fireplace, and lighted by this little window [it has but one], lived one of the most extraordinary men; here wrote some of the most celebrated poems of modern times.'—*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, No. 93.

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
And done nae thing,
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank, and clarkit
My cash-account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a' th' amount.

I started, muttering, blockhead! coof! fool
And heaved on high my waukit loof, hardened palm
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I henceforth would be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath—

When, click! the string the snick did draw;
And, jee! the door gaed to the wa';
And by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin' bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw,
Come full in sight.

Ye needna doubt I held my whisht;
The infant aith, half-formed, was crusht;
I glowred as eerie 's I'd been dusht
In some wild glen;[1]
When sweet, like modest Worth, she blusht,
And steppèd ben. inward

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted gracefu' round her brows;
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token,
And come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

A 'hairbrained, sentimental trace'[2]
Was strongly markèd in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, even turned on empty space,
Beamed keen with honour.

[1] 'I stared as full of superstitious fear as if I had been thrown to the ground by meeting a being of the other world in some wild glen.'

[2] This expression had previously occurred in the *Epistle to James Smith*.

Down flowed her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
And such a leg! my bonny Jean[1]
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight and clean,[2]
Nane else cam near it.

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seemed to my astonished view
A well-known land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost:
Here, tumbling billows marked the coast
With surging foam;
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast—
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon poured down his far-fetched floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds: sounds
Auld hermit Ayr staw through his woods,
On to the shore,
And many a lesser torrent scuds runs
With seeming roar.

Low in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough reared her head;[3]
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,
To every nobler virtue bred,
And polished grace.

By stately tower or palace fair,[4]
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seemed to muse, some seemed to dare,
With feature stern.

[1] In the first edition, the line stood thus—

'And such a leg! my Bess, I ween.'

Indignation at the conduct of Jean induced him to take the compliment from her, and bestow it on another person for whom at the time he entertained an admiration. In the first Edinburgh edition, the indignant feeling having subsided, the line was restored as above.

[2] Clean is often used in Scotland to describe a handsome figure or limb. Such is the sense here.

[3] Ayr, whose charter dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

[4] This, and the six ensuing stanzas, were added in the second edition, for the purpose, apparently, of complimenting Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, and other great people who had befriended the author.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race[1] heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dyed steel
In sturdy blows;
While back-recoiling seemed to reel
Their suthron foes.

His Country's saviour,[2] mark him well!
Bold Richardton's[3] heroic swell;
The chief on Sark[4] who glorious fell
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptred Pictish shade[5]
Stalked round his ashes lowly laid,
I marked a martial race, portrayed
In colours strong;
Bold, soldier-featured, undismayed
They strode along.[6]

Through many a wild romantic grove,[7]
Near many a hermit-fancied cove
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love),[8]
In musing mood,
An aged judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

[1] The Wallaces.—*B.*

[2] William Wallace.—*B.*

[3] Adam Wallace of Richardton, cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.—*B.*

[4] Wallace, Laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought in 1448. The glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant Laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.—*B.*

[5] Coilus, king of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family-seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial-place is still shewn.—*B.* The spot pointed out by tradition as the burial-place of Coilus, is a small mount marked by a few trees. It was opened, May 29, 1837, when two sepulchral urns were found, attesting that tradition has been at least correct in describing the spot as a burial-place, though whose ashes these were it would be difficult to say.

[6] The Montgomeries of Coilsfield.

[7] Barskimming, the seat of the Lord Justice-Clerk.—*B.* (Sir Thomas Miller of Glenlee, afterwards President of the Court of Session.)

[8] Burns had wandered in this valley with his friend Sillar, and his youthful mistress, Highland Mary.

With deep-struck reverential awe,
The learnèd sire and son I saw,[1]
To Nature's God and Nature's law
They gave their lore,
This, all its source and end to draw;
That, to adore.

Brydone's brave ward[2] I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;
Who called on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high,
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonished stare,
I viewed the heavenly-seeming fair;
A whispering throb did witness bear
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

'All hail! my own inspirèd bard!
In me thy native Muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

'Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light, aërial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

'They Scotia's race among them share;
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard, a darling care,
The tuneful art.

[1] The Rev. Dr Matthew Stewart, the celebrated mathematician, and his son, Mr Dugald Stewart, the elegant expositor of the Scotch system of metaphysics, are here meant; their small villa of Catrine being situated on the Ayr.

[2] Colonel Fullarton.—*B.* This gentleman had travelled under the care of Patrick Brydone, author of a well-known *Tour in Sicily and Malta.*

'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits, pour;
Or, 'mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

'And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild, poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

'Hence Fullarton, the brave and young;
Hence Dempster's zeal-inspirèd[1] tongue;
Hence sweet harmonious Beattie sung
His "Minstrel lays;"
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,
The sceptic's bays.

'To lower orders are assigned
The humbler ranks of humankind,
The rustic bard, the labouring-hind,
The artisan;
All choose, as various they're inclined,
The various man.

'When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threatening storm some, strongly, rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain,
With tillage skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blithe o'er the hill.

'Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the labourer's weary toil,
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

'Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each opening grace,
A guide and guard.

[1] In first edition—
'Hence Dempster's truth-prevailing tongue.'

'Of these am I—Coila my name;[1]
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells,[2] chiefs of fame,
Held ruling power:
I marked thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

'With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely-caroled, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fired at the simple, artless lays,
Of other times.

'I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove through the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

'Or when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherished every floweret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In every grove,
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

'When ripened fields, and azure skies,
Called forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their evening joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

'When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adorèd Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

[1] The idea of this visionary being is acknowledged by Burns himself to have been taken from the *Scota* of Mr Alexander Ross, a Mearns poet, author of a pastoral of some merit, entitled *The Fortunate Shepherdess.*

[2] The Loudoun branch of the Campbells is here meant. Mossgiel and much of the neighbouring ground was the property of the Earl of Loudoun.

'I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

'I taught thy manners painting strains,
The loves, the wants of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

'Thou canst not learn, nor can I shew,
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

'Yet, all beneath the unrivalled rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Though large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows
Adown the glade.

'Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And, trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

'To give my counsels all in one—
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of man,
With soul erect;
And trust, the universal plan
Will all protect.

And wear thou this,' she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:

The polished leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.[1]

The poet is here left reassured and comforted in the all-sufficing grace of the Muse; but no such feeling, however thoroughly once established, could long hold sway over one so sensitive as he to all the harassing problems of his lowly destiny, and to all that met his eye in humble life. At every recoil from the glowing excitement of the social hour, the love-meeting, or the triumphant essay in verse, the deep contemplative melancholy which has been remembered by so many as the reigning expression of his face, again beset him. We have a description of these darker moods of his mind in a poem, otherwise sufficiently remarkable as containing an early specimen of his composition in pure English. In the *Winter Night* we see a reflection of Gray and Collins, as in the *Epistles* we see a reflection of Ramsay.

[1] A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1852, expresses his opinion that Burns was indebted for the idea of *The Vision* to a copy of verses written by the 'melancholy and pensive Wollaston,' so far back as 1681. 'Wollaston's poem was written on the occasion of his leaving, "with a heavy heart," as he says, his beloved Cambridge.' He describes himself as sitting in his own 'small apartment:'

'As here one day I sate,
Disposed to ruminate,
Deep melancholy did benumb,
With thoughts of what was past and what to come.

* * * *

I thought I saw my Muse appear,
Whose dress declared her haste, whose looks her fear;
A wreath of laurel in her hand she bore,
Such laurel as the god Apollo wore.
The piercing wind had backward combed her hair,
And laid a paint of red upon the fair;
Her gown, which, with celestial colour dyed,
Was with a golden girdle tied,
Through speed a little flowed aside,
And decently disclosed her knee;
When, stopping suddenly, she spoke to me:
"What indigested thought, or rash advice,
Has caused thee to apostatise?
Not my ill-usage, surely, made thee fly
From thy apprenticeship in poetry."

She paused awhile, with joy and weariness oppressed,
And quick reciprocations of her breast,
She spoke again: "What travel and what care
Have I bestowed! my vehicle of air
How often changed in quest of thee!"'

She concludes, like the Muse of Burns, by counselling him to remain true to her and poetry:

'"Suppose the worst, thy passage rough, still I'll be kind,
And breathe upon thy sails behind;
Besides there is a port before:
And every moment thou advancest to the shore,
Where virtuous souls shall better usage find."
Concern and agitation of my head
Waked me; and with the light the phantom fled.'

A WINTER NIGHT.

"Poor naked wretches, wherever you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm!
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these?"—SHAKESPEARE.

When biting Boreas, fell and dure, — hard—sharp
Sharp shivers through the leafless bower;
When Phœbus gies a short-lived glower — stare
Far south the lift, — sky
Dim-darkening through the flaky shower,
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
Poor Labour sweet in sleep was locked,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-choked,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or, through the mining outlet bocked,
Down headlong hurl.

Listening, the doors and winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle, — drooping
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle — battling
O' winter war,
And through the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle, — scramble
Beneath a scaur. — cliff

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cower thy chittering wing,
And close thy e'e?

Even you, on murdering errands toiled,
Lone from your savage homes exiled,
The blood-stained roost, and sheep-cot spoiled,
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now Phœbe, in her midnight reign,
Dark muffled, viewed the dreary plain;
Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain
Slow, solemn, stole:—

'Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage, as now united, shews
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
Vengeful malice unrepenting,
Than heaven-illumined man on brother man bestows![1]

'See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Wo, Want, and Murder o'er a land!
E'en in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pampered Luxury, Flattery by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud Property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glittering show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefined,
Placed for her lordly use thus far, thus vile below.

'Where, where is Love's fond, tender throe,
With lordly Honour's lofty brow,
The powers you proudly own?
Is there, beneath Love's noble name,
Can harbour dark the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone!
Mark maiden innocence a prey
To love-pretending snares,
This boasted Honour turns away,
Shunning soft Pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears and unavailing prayers!
Perhaps this hour, in misery's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!

'Oh ye who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think for a moment on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!

[1] Blow, blow, thou winter wind;
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude. . . .
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky;
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot. . . .—SHAKESPEARE.

Ill satisfied keen nature's clamorous call,
  Stretched on his straw, he lays himself to sleep,
While through the ragged roof and chinky wall,
  Chill o'er his slumbers piles the drifty heap!
    Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
    Where Guilt and poor Misfortune pine,
    Guilt, erring man, relenting view!
    But shall thy legal rage pursue
    The wretch, already crushèd low
    By cruel Fortune's undeservèd blow?
  Affliction's sons are brothers in distress;
  A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!'

I heard nae mair, for Chanticleer
  Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hailed the morning with a cheer,
  A cottage-rousing craw.

But deep this truth impressed my mind—
  Through all His works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind
  The most resembles God.

During the autumn of 1785, Burns had an opportunity of seeing and studying a being in a great measure new to him—a young accomplished lady of the upper classes. Miss Margaret (usually called in old Scottish style, Miss Peggy) K—— was the daughter of a land-proprietor in Carrick: Burns met her at the house of a Mauchline friend, where she was paying a visit. The lively conversation of the young lady, which he interpreted into wit, her youth and beauty, deeply impressed the susceptible poet, and in a spirit of respect suitable to her rank and apparent destiny in life, he made her the subject of a song, which he sent to her enclosed in a letter:—

TO MISS K——.

MADAM—Permit me to present you with the enclosed song, as a small though grateful tribute for the honour of your acquaintance. I have, in these verses, attempted some faint sketches of your portrait in the unembellished, simple manner of descriptive TRUTH. Flattery I leave to your LOVERS, whose exaggerating fancies may make them imagine you still nearer perfection than you really are.

Poets, madam, of all mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of BEAUTY; as, if they are really POETS of Nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate than most of the world. In the cheerful bloom of SPRING, or the pensive

mildness of AUTUMN, the grandeur of SUMMER, or the hoary majesty of WINTER, the poet feels a charm unknown to the rest of his species. Even the sight of a fine flower, or the company of a fine woman (by far the finest part of God's works below), have sensations for the poetic heart that the HERD of men are strangers to. On this last account, madam, I am, as in many other things, indebted to Mr H.'s kindness in introducing me to you. Your lovers may view you with a wish, I look on you with pleasure: their hearts, in your presence, may glow with desire, mine rises with admiration.

That the arrows of misfortune, however they should, as incident to humanity, glance a slight wound, may never reach your *heart*—that the snares of villainy may never beset you in the road of life—that INNOCENCE may hand you by the path of HONOUR to the dwelling of PEACE—is the sincere wish of him who has the honour to be, &c. R. B.

The song was published after the poet's death, under the title of

YOUNG PEGGY.

TUNE—*Last time I came o'er the Muir.*

Young Peggy blooms our bonniest lass,
  Her blush is like the morning,
The rosy dawn, the springing grass,
  With early gems adorning:
Her eyes outshine the radiant beams
  That gild the passing shower,
And glitter o'er the crystal streams,
  And cheer each freshening flower.

Her lips, more than the cherries bright,
  A richer dye has graced them;
They charm th' admiring gazer's sight,
  And sweetly tempt to taste them:
Her smile is, as the evening, mild,
  When feathered tribes are courting,
And little lambkins wanton wild,
  In playful bands disporting.

Were Fortune lovely Peggy's foe,
  Such sweetness would relent her,
As blooming Spring unbends the brow
  Of surly, savage Winter.
Detraction's eye no aim can gain,
  Her winning powers to lessen;
And fretful Envy grins in vain
  The poisoned tooth to fasten.

Ye powers of Honour, Love, and Truth,
From every ill defend her;
Inspire the highly-favoured youth
The destinies intend her:

Still fan the sweet connubial flame
Responsive in each bosom,
And bless the dear parental name
With many a filial blossom.[1]

Alas for these poetical good wishes! The bard could little imagine the sad fate which was in reality in store for Young Peggy. While this blooming creature of seventeen—for she was no older—appeared to be followed and wooed by a most eligible lover—the youthful representative of the oldest and richest family in Galloway—and thus in the fair way to a dignified position in life, the powers of Honour, Love, and Truth had already been outraged, and a train of circumstances commenced, which was to end in the loss of her good name and her early death.

We have now to see Burns in a different mood. He was, as has been said, no lover of drink, but his social spirit had invested it with many interesting associations in his mind. Looking round for subjects, the poem of Fergusson, entitled *Caller Water*, seems to have suggested to him a similar strain on the artificial beverages of his native country.

SCOTCH DRINK.

'Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That 's sinking in despair;
And liquor guid, to fire his bluid,
That 's prest wi' grief and care;
There let him boose, and deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
And minds his griefs no more.'
SOLOMON'S PROVERBS, xxxi. 6, 7.

Let other poets raise a fracas
'Bout vines, and wines, and drucken Bacchus,
And crabbit names and stories wrack us,
And grate our lug, ear
I sing the juice Scotch beare can mak us,
In glass or jug.

[1] The letter to Miss K—— appeared, without date, in Cromek's volume; the song of *Young Peggy*, in Stewart's edition of *Burns's Poems*. Their connection and date, and the

O thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch drink;
Whether through wimplin' worms thou jink, steal
Or, richly brown, ream o'er the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me, till I lisp and wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn,
And aits set up their awnie horn, bearded
And peas and beans, at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain,
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn,
Thou king o' grain!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
In souple scones, the wale o' food! barley-cakes—choice
Or tumblin' in the boilin' flood
Wi' kail and beef;
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

Food fills the wame, and keeps us livin';
Though life 's a gift no worth receivin',
When heavy dragged wi' pine and grievin';
But, oiled by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill scrievin', gliding
Wi' rattlin' glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,
At 's weary toil;
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

manner of the poet's acquaintance with the lady, are given on the authority of his sister, who has a tolerably clear recollection of the circumstances.

'Burns met Miss K—— at Mr Hamilton's, where she lived some time. My mother remembers a conversation between Robert and Gilbert, on the *har'st rig*, respecting the young lady and the song which had been written upon her. Gilbert said he did not think quite so much of her. Robert said she had a great deal of wit. One Sarah Weir, who was often about Mr Hamilton's, working, and knew them all well, was shearing on the same ridge with my mother. At the poet's remark about the wit of Miss K——, Sarah stopped and asked him if it was not of a shallow kind. The bard only replied with a look of contempt, which greatly amused my mother at the time, and which still remains imprinted on her memory.'—*Letter of Isabella Begg*, October 1850.

Aft clad in massy siller weed,
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;[1]
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine,
His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
Thou kitchens fine.[2] relishest

Thou art the life o' public haunts;
But thee, what were our fairs and rants? Without
Even godly meetings o' the saunts,
By thee inspired,
When gaping they besiege the tents,[3]
Are doubly fired.

That merry night we get the corn in,
O sweetly then thou reams the horn in!
Or reekin' on a New-year morning
In cog or bicker, wooden vessels
And just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,
And gusty sucker! sugar

When Vulcan gics his bellows breath,
And ploughmen gather wi' their graith, implements
Oh rare! to see thee fizz and freath
I' the lugget caup! eared cup
Then Burnewin comes on like death Blacksmith
At every chap.

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owerhip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block and studdie ring and reel
Wi' dinsome clamour.

When skirlin' weanies see the light, screaming infants
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright,
How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight; fools
Wae worth the name!
Nae howdie gets a social night, midwife
Or plack frae them. coin

[1] As ale in silver mugs, at the tables of the wealthy.

[2] Brisk small-beer is a favourite relish to porridge in Scotland. This humane passage redeems much that is objectionable in the poem.

[3] Sitting round the movable pulpits erected in the open air at parochial celebrations of the communion.—See notes to *Holy Fair*.

When neebors anger at a plea,
And just as wud as wud can be, mad
How easy can the barley-bree
Cement the quarrel!
It 's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee
To taste the barrel.

Alake! that e'er my Muse has reason
To wyte her countrymen wi' treason! blame
But monie daily weet their weason throat
Wi' liquors nice,
And hardly, in a winter's season,
E'er spier her price. ask

Wae worth that brandy, burning trash!
Fell source o' monie a pain and brash! sickness
'Twins monie a poor, doylt, drucken hash, rough fellow
O' half his days;
And sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes.

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well,
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,
Poor plackless devils like mysel',
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell, meddle
Or foreign gill.

May gravels round his blather wrench,
And gouts torment him inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch mouth—frown
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' whisky-punch
Wi' honest men!

Oh whisky! soul o' plays and pranks!
Accept a Bardie's gratefu' thanks!
When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses!
Thou comes—they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's ——!

Thee, Ferintosh! oh sadly lost!
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic grips, and barkin' hoast, cough
May kill us a';
For loyal Forbes' chartered boast
Is ta'en awa![1]

[1] For services and expenses on the public account at the Revolution, Forbes of Culloden was empowered, by an act of the Scottish Parliament in 1690, to distil whisky on his barony of

Thee mirk mose-breathes of thy Maeme,
Wha mak the whisky-stills their prime,
Hand up thy hand, Deil, mair wi' time!
There, seize the blinkers,
And bake them up in brimstone pine
For pain i——d drinkers.

Fortune, if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, and whisky-gill, barley-cake
And siwth o' thine to rove at will, sinnings
This is the task,
And leave to rhoun as thy hand skill
Direct thee best.

The subject here broached is taken up in another poem, of even greater merit than the preceding. Towards the close of the year 1785, loud complaints were made by the Scottish distillers respecting the vexatious and oppressive manner in which the Excise laws were enforced at their establishments—such rigour, they said, being exercised at the instigation of the London distillers, who looked with jealousy on the success of their northern brethren. So great was the severity of the Excise, that many distillers were obliged to abandon the trade, and the price of barley was beginning to be affected. Illicit distillation was also found to be alarmingly on the increase. In consequence of the earnest remonstrances of the distillers, backed by the county gentlemen, an act was passed in the session of 1786 (alluded to by the author), whereby the duties on low wines, spirits, &c., were discontinued, and an annual tax imposed on stills, according to their capacity. This act gave general satisfaction. It seems to

Forfeitsh, in Dumbartonshire, free of duty. This inconsiderately conferred privilege in time became the source of a great revenue to the family; and *Forfeitsh* was at length recognised as something like a synonym for whisky, so much of it was there distilled. By the act respecting the Scotch distilleries in 1785, this privilege was declared to be abolished, the Lords of the Treasury being left to make such compensation to the existing Mr Forbes as should be deemed just; or, should they fail to make a satisfactory arrangement, the case was to be decided by a jury before the Scottish Court of Exchequer. The Lords failing to satisfy Mr Forbes, the case was accordingly tried by a jury, November 29, 1785, when it was shewn by Mr Henry Erskine, the plaintiff's counsel, that the privilege could be made to yield no less than £7000 a year to the family, though the actual annual gains from it, at an average of the last thirteen years, was but a little more than £1000. He further shewed, that while the right was an *inalienable piece of property*, which nothing could justly take away, the family had not failed to deserve it, as they had ever continued useful and loyal servants to the government: Mr *Duncan Forbes*, the late Lord President, having, in particular, spent no less than £20,000 of his *private fortune* in suppressing the rebellion of 1745–6. The jury surprised the Lords of the Treasury by decreeing the sum of £21,580 for 'loyal Forbes' chartered boast.'

have been during the general outcry against fiscal oppression at the end of 1785, or beginning of 1786, that Burns composed

THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER

TO THE SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

'Dearest of distillation! last and best!
How art thou lost!'—PARODY ON MILTON.

Ye Irish lords, ye knights and squires,
Wha represent our brughs and shires,
And doucely manage our affairs — soberly
In parliament,
To you a simple Bardie's prayers
Are humbly sent.

Alas! my roopit[1] Muse is hearse!
Your honours' heart wi' grief 'twad pierce,
To see her sittin' on her ——
Low i' the dust,
And screechin' out prosaic verse,
And like to burst!

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,
Scotland and me 's in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction
On aqua vitæ;
And rouse them up to strong conviction,
And move their pity.

Stand forth, and tell yon Premier youth,[2]
The honest, open, naked truth:
Tell him o' mine and Scotland's drouth,
His servants humble:
The muckle devil blaw ye south,
If ye dissemble.

Does ony great man glunch and gloom? — frown
Speak out, and never fash your thoom! — trouble
Let posts and pensions sink or soom
Wi' them wha grant 'em:
If honestly they canna come,
Far better want 'em.

[1] A person at the last stage of cold in the throat is said in Scotland to be *roopit*. The word is not in Jamieson.

[2] Mr Pitt.

In gath'rin' votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack;
Ne'er claw your lug, and fidge your back, ear—shrug
And hum and haw;
But raise your arm, and tell your crack, speech
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greeting owre her thrissle, weeping
Her mutchkin stoup as toom 's a whistle; empty
And d——d exciseman in a bussle,
Seizin' a stell,
Triumphant crushin 't like a mussel
Or lampit shell.

Then on the tither hand present her,
A blackguard smuggler, right behint her,
And cheek-for-chow, a chuffie vintner, fat-faced
Colleaguing join,
Picking her pouch as bare as winter
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name o' Scot,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,
To see his poor auld mither's pot
Thus dung in staves,
And plundered o' her hindmost groat
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I 'm but a nameless wight,
Trod i' the mire out o' sight!
But could I like Montgomeries fight,[1]
Or gab like Boswell,[2]
There 's some sark-necks I wad draw tight,
And tie some hose well.

God bless your honours, can ye see 't,
The kind, auld, cantie carlin greet, cheerful old wife
And no get warmly to your feet,
And gar them hear it,
And tell them with a patriot heat,
Ye winna bear it?

[1] The poet here alludes, in chief, to Hugh Montgomery of Coilsfield, representative of Ayrshire in parliament, and subsequently twelfth Earl of Eglintoune. He had served as an officer in the American war.

[2] James Boswell of Auchinleck, the well-known biographer of Johnson. He frequently spoke at the Ayrshire county meetings.

Some o' you nicely ken the laws,
To round the period and pause,
And wi' rhetoric clause on clause
To mak harangues;
Then echo through Saint Stephen's wa's
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster,[1] a true blue Scot I 'se warran';
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran;[2]
And that glib-gabbet Highland baron, ready-tongued
The Laird o' Graham;[3]
And ane, a chap that 's d——d auldfarran, sagacious
Dundas his name.[4]

Erskine,[5] a spunkie Norland billie;
True Campbells, Frederick[6] and Ilay;[7]
And Livingstone, the bauld Sir Willie;
And mony ithers,
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.

See, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented,
If bardies e'er are represented;
I ken if that your sword were wanted,
Ye 'd lend a hand,
But when there 's ought to say anent it,
Ye 're at a stand.[8]

[1] George Dempster of Dunnichen. See the *Epistle to James Smith*, and *The Vision*.

[2] Sir Adam Fergusson of Kilkerran, Bart. He had several times represented Ayrshire, but at present was member for the city of Edinburgh.

[3] The Marquis of Graham, eldest son of the Duke of Montrose. He became the third Duke of Montrose, and died in 1836.

[4] The Right Hon. Henry Dundas, Treasurer of the Navy, and M.P. for Edinburghshire, afterwards Viscount Melville.

[5] Probably Thomas Erskine, afterwards Lord Erskine; but he was not then in parliament.

[6] Lord Frederick Campbell, second brother of the Duke of Argyle, Lord Register of Scotland, and M.P. for the county of Argyle in this, and the one preceding, and the two subsequent parliaments.

[7] Ilay Campbell, Lord Advocate for Scotland, representative in this parliament of the Glasgow group of burghs. He was afterwards President of the Court of Session, and died in 1823 at an advanced age.

[8] This stanza, alluding to the imperfect elocution of the gallant Montgomery of Coilsfield, was omitted from the poem by the author.

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,
To get auld Scotland back her kettle;
Or faith! I'll wad my new plough-pettle, pledge
Ye'll see't or lang, ere
She'll teach you wi' a reekin' whittle, knife
Anither sang.

This while she's been in crankous mood,
Her lost militia[1] fired her bluid;
(Deil na they never mair do guid,
Played her that pliskie!) trick
And now she's like to rin red-wud mad
About her whisky.

And L—! if ance they pit her till't,
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt,
And durk and pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
And rin her whittle to the hilt
I' th' first she meets!

For G— sake, sirs! then speak her fair,
And straik her cannie wi' the hair,
And to the muckle house repair,
Wi' instant speed,
And strive, wi' a' your wit and lear,
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongued tinkler, Charlie Fox,
May taunt you wi' his jeers and mocks;
But gie him't het, my hearty cocks!
E'en cow the cadie! fellow
And send him to his dicing-box
And sportin' lady.

Tell yon guid bluid o' auld Boconnocks,[2]
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bannocks,[3]

[1] A militia bill for Scotland was introduced into parliament in 1782, when the country was in danger of French and Dutch invasion. The Rockingham ministry, perhaps taking alarm at the attitude of the Irish militia, proposed a clause at the third reading for facilitating enlistment from the designed militia into the army; and the bill, being declined in this form by Dempster and other patriots, was lost.

[2] Mr Pitt's father, the Earl of Chatham, was the second son of Robert Pitt of Boconnock, in the county of Cornwall.

[3] 'Scones made from a mixture of oats, peas, or beans, with wheat or barley, ground fine, and denominated *mashlum*, are in general use, and form a wholesome and palatable food.'—*New Statistical Account of Scotland, parish of Dalry, Ayrshire.*

And drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock's[1]
Nine times a week,
If he some scheme, like tea and winnocks,[2]
Wad kindly seek.

Could he some commutation broach,
I 'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch,
He need na fear their foul reproach,
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie queer hotch-potch,
The Coalition.

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue; stout
She 's just a devil wi' a rung; bludgeon
And if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Though by the neck she should be strung,
She 'll no desert.

And now, ye chosen Five-and-Forty,
May still your mither's heart support ye;
Then, though a minister grow dorty, sulky
And kick your place,
Ye 'll snap your fingers poor and hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your honours a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise,
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes jackdaws
That haunt St Jamie's!
Your humble Poet sings and prays,
While Rab his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

Let half-starved slaves in warmer skies
See future wines, rich clust'ring, rise;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But blithe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whisky.

[1] A worthy old hostess of the author's in Mauchline, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of guid auld Scotch drink.—*B.* Nanse's story was different. On seeing the poem, she declared that the poet had never been but once or twice in her house. A portrait of Nanse was taken by Brooks in 1799, and has been engraved.

[2] The young Chancellor of the Exchequer had gained some credit by a measure introduced in 1784 for preventing smuggling of tea by reducing the duty, the revenue being compensated by a tax on windows.

What though their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms!
When wretches range, in famished swarms,
The scented groves,
Or hounded forth, dishonour arms
In hungry droves.

Their gun 's a burden on their shouther;
They downa bide the stink o' powther;
Their bauldest thought 's a hank'ring swither uncertainty
To stan' or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they 're aff, a'throwther,
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotchman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say such is royal George's will,
And there 's the foe,
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes—wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy han' a welcome gies him;
And when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin' lea'es him
In faint huzzas!

Sages their solemn een may steek, shut
And raise a philosophic reek,
And physically causes seek,
In clime and season;
But tell me whisky's name in Greek,
I 'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither!
Though whiles ye moistify your leather,
Till whare ye sit, on craps o' heather
Ye tine your dam; lose
Freedom and whisky gang thegither!—
Tak aff your dram!

To the early part of 1786 may be referred a poem which seems to have attracted less attention than most others of the same degree of effort, but which, we think, presents a most pleasing strain of that benevolent feeling which Burns entertained towards

the humbler animals. He here assumes a fictitious character—that of an old farmer:

THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE MAGGIE,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR.

A guid New-year I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie: — handful
Though thou's howe-backit, now, and knaggie, — bony
I've seen the day
Thou could hae gaen like ony staggie — colt
Out-owre the lay.

Though now thou's dowie, stiff, and crazy, — drooping
And thy auld hide's as white's a daisy,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek, and glaizie,
A bonny gray:
He should been tight that daur't to raize thee — excite
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, steeve, and swank, — firm—stately
And set weel down a shapely shank
As e'er tread yird;
And could hae flown out-owre a stank — morass
Like ony bird.

It's now some nine-and-twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guid-father's meare;
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear, — dowry
And fifty mark;
Though it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
And thou was stark. — strong

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
Ye then was trottin' wi' your minnie: — mother
Though ye was trickie, slee, and funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie: — mischievous
But hamely, tawie,[1] quiet, and cannie,
And unco sonsie. — engaging

That day ye pranced wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonny bride:
And sweet and gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle-Stewart I could braggèd wide,
For sic a pair.

[1] That allows itself peaceably to be handled.

Though now ye dow but hoyte and hobble, can—limp
And wintle like a saumont-coble, twist
That day ye was a jinker noble, runner
For heels and win'!
And ran them till they a' did wauble reel
Far, far behin'!

When thou and I were young and skeigh, high-mettled
And stable-meals at fairs were dreigh, tedious
How thou would prance, and snore, and skreigh,
And tak the road!
Town's bodies ran, and stood abeigh, off
And ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, and I was mellow,
We took the road aye like a swallow:
At brooses[1] thou had ne'er a fellow
For pith and speed;
But every tail thou pay't them hollow,
Whare'er thou gaed.

The sma' droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle,
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle; perhaps—race
But sax Scotch miles thou try't their mettle,
And gar't them whaizle: wheeze
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazle.

Thou was a noble fittie-lan',[2]
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!
Aft thee and I, in aught hours' gaun,
In guid March weather,
Hae turned sax rood beside our han'
For days thegither.

Thou never braindg't, and fetch't, and fliskit, raged—kicked
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whisket,
And spread abreed thy weel-filled brisket breast
Wi' pith and power,
Till spritty knowes wad rair't and risket,
And slypet owre.[3]

[1] A race at a marriage is called a *broose*.

[2] The near horse of the hindmost pair in the plough.

[3] 'Till hillocks, where the earth was full of tough-rooted plants, would have given forth a cracking sound, and the clods gently fallen over.'

When frosts lay lang, and snaws were deep,
And threatened labour back to keep,
I gied thy cog a wee bit heap
Aboon the timmer;
I kenn'd my Maggie wad na sleep
For that, or simmer. ere

In cart or car thou never reestit;
The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it; steepest
Thou never lap, and sten't, and breastit, reared
Then stood to blaw;
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa'. pushed on

My pleugh is now thy bairn-time a';
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;[1]
Forbye sax mae I've sell't awa',
That thou hast nurst:
They drew me thretteen pund and twa,
The very warst.

Monie a sair daurk we twa hae wrought, day's work
And wi' the weary warl' fought!
And monie an anxious day I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin',
And thy auld days may end in starvin',
For my last fow, bushel
A heapit stimpart,[2] I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither; move
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether,
To some hain'd rig, saved ridge
Where ye may nobly rax your leather, stretch
Wi' sma' fatigue.

'The tale of the *Twa Dogs*,' says Gilbert Burns, 'was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken. Robert had a dog, which he called Luath, that was a great favourite. The dog had been killed by the wanton cruelty of some person the

[1] Meaning—all the four horses now working in my plough are thy progeny.

[2] The eighth part of a bushel.

night before my father's death. Robert said to me that he should like to confer such immortality as he could bestow on his old friend Luath, and that he had a great mind to introduce something into the book under the title of Stanzas to the Memory of a Quadruped Friend; but this plan was given up for the poem as it now stands. Cæsar was merely the creature of the poet's imagination, created for the purpose of holding chat with his favourite Luath.

THE TWA DOGS:

A TALE.

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle
That bears the name o' Auld King Coil,[1]
Upon a bonny day in June,
When wearing through the afternoon,
Twa dogs that were na thrang at hame,
Forgathered ance upon a time. — Encountered

The first I'll name, they ca'd him Cæsar,
Was keepit for his honour's pleasure;
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
Shewed he was nane o' Scotland's dogs,
But whalpit some place far abroad,
Whare sailors gang to fish for cod.

His lockèd, lettered, braw brass-collar,
Shewed him the gentleman and scholar;
But though he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride—nae pride had he;
But wad hae spent an hour caressin',
E'en wi' a tinkler-gipsy's messan. — cur
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
Nae tawted tyke, though c'er sae duddie, — dirty—ragged
But he wad stan't, as glad to see him,
And stroan't on stanes and hillocks wi' him.

[1] Kyle, the middle district of Ayrshire. The portion to the north of the river Ayr is distinguished as Kyle-Stewart, having once belonged to that family, and afterwards to the eldest son of the sovereign. This was the district in which Burns had lived since his nineteenth year.

Kyle is supposed by the old antiquaries to derive its name from Coilus, king of the Picts—a mere myth. Modern antiquaries, with perhaps no better grounds, derive the word from *choille*, Gaelic for wood. It may be from *caol* (pronounced kyle), Gaelic for a firth or sound, with reference to the arm of the sea which bounds the district to the west—a term which gives name to a strait to the north of Bute island, not far off, and which is also supposed to be the origin of the name Calais.

The tither was a ploughman's collie,
A rhyming, ranting, roving billie,
Wha for his friend and comrade had him,
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,
After some dog in Highland sang,[1]
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang!

He was a gash and faithful tyke,
As ever lap a sheugh or dike. ditch
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face,[2]
Aye gat him friends in ilka place. each
His breast was white, his touzie back shaggy
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gaucy tail, wi' upward curl, jolly
Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl. hips

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither, fond
And unco pack and thick thegither; intimate
Wi' social nose whyles snuffed and snowkit,
Whyles mice and moudieworts they howkit; dug
Whyles scoured awa' in lang excursion,
And worried ither in diversion;
Until wi' daffin' weary grown, sporting
Upon a knowe they sat them down, hillock
And there began a lang digression
About the lords o' the creation.

CÆSAR.

I've aften wondered, honest Luath,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
And when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies lived ava.

Our laird gets in his racked rents,
His coals, his kain,[3] and a' his stents;[4]
He rises when he likes himsel';
His flunkies answer at the bell;
He ca's his coach, he ca's his horse;
He draws a bonny silken purse
As lang 's my tail, whare, through the stecks, stitches
The yellow lettered Geordie keeks. peeps

Frae morn to e'en its nought but toiling,
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;

[1] Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's *Fingal*.—*B*.
[2] Having a white stripe down the face.
[3] Rent in the shape of farm-produce.
[4] Assessments.

And though the gentry first are stechin, stuffing
Yet e'en the ha' folk fill their pechan kitchen-people
Wi' sauce, ragouts, and sic-like trashtrie,
That 's little short o' downright wastrie.
Our whipper-in, wee blastit wonner,
Poor worthless elf, it eats a dinner
Better than ony tenant man
His honour has in a' the lan';
And what poor cot-folk pit their painch in, stomach
I own it 's past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they 're fash't enough; troubled
A cotter howkin' in a sheugh,
Wi' dirty stanes biggin' a dike,
Barring a quarry, and sic-like:
Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie o' wee duddie weans,
And nought but his han' darg, to keep day's work
Them right and tight in thack and rape.

And when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health, or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,
And they maun starve o' cauld and hunger;
But how it comes, I never kenn'd yet,
They 're maistly wonderfu' contented:
And buirdly chiels, and clever hizzies, stately—girls
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye 're negleckit,
How huffed, and cuffed, and disrespeckit!
L—, man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, and sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by poor folk,
As I wad by a stinkin' brock. badger
I 've noticed, on our Laird's court-day,
And monie a time my heart 's been wae,
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash: bear with
He 'll stamp and threaten, curse and swear,
He 'll apprehend them, poind their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
And hear it a', and fear and tremble!

I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor folk maun be wretches!

LUATH.

They 're no sae wretched 's ane wad think;
Though constantly on poortith's brink: poverty
They 're sae accustomed wi' the sight,
The view o't gies them little fright.
Then chance and fortune are sae guided,
They 're aye in less or mair provided;
And though fatigued wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest 's a sweet enjoyment.

The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans and faithfu' wives; thriving
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fireside;
And whyles twalpennie worth[1] o' nappy ale
Can mak the bodies unco happy;
They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs:
They 'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin',
And ferlie at the folk in Lon'on. wonder

As bleak-faced Hallowmas returns,
They get the jovial, ranting kirns,
When rural life o' every station
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, and social Mirth
Forgets there 's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's;
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
And sheds a heart-inspiring steam:
The luntin' pipe, and sneeshin-mill,
Are handed round wi' right guidwill;
The cantie auld folks crackin' crouse, talking briskly
The young anes rantin' through the house—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.

Still it 's owre true that ye hae said,
Sic game is now owre aften played.
There 's monie a creditable stock
O' decent, honest, fawsont fo'k seemly
Are riven out baith root and branch,
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,

[1] A pennyworth, twelve pence of Scotch money being equal to one penny sterling.

Wha thinks to knit himsel' the faster
In favour wi' some gentle master,
Wha aiblins thrang a parliamentin',
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'——

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it;
For Britain's guid! guid faith, I doubt it.
Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him,
And saying Ay or No's they bid him:
At operas and plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading;
Or maybe, in a frolic daft,
To Hague or Calais takes a waft,
To mak a tour and tak a whirl,
To learn *bon ton,* and see the worl'.

There, at Vienna or Versailles,
He rives his father's auld entails; tears
Or by Madrid he takes the route,
To thrum guitars, and fecht wi' nowte; bullocks
Or down Italian vista startles,
W—— hunting amang groves o' myrtles;
Then bouses drumly German water,
To mak himsel' look fair and fatter,
And clear the consequential sorrows,
Love-gifts of Carnival signoras.

For Britain's guid!—for her destruction!
Wi' dissipation, feud, and faction.

LUATH.

Hech, man! dear sirs! is that the gate
They waste sae mony a braw estate!
Are we sae foughten and harassed
For gear to gang that gate at last!

Oh would they stay aback frae courts,
And please themsel's wi' country sports,
It wad for every ane be better,
The Laird, the Tenant, and the Cotter!
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,
Fient haet o' them 's ill-hearted fellows;
Except for breakin' o' their timmer,
Or speakin' lightly o' their limmer,
Or shootin' o' a hare or moorcock,
The ne'er a bit they 're ill to poor folk.

But will ye tell me, Master Cæsar,
Sure great folk's life 's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld or hunger e'er can steer them,
The very thought o't needna fear them.

CÆSAR.

L—, man, were ye but whyles whare I am,
The gentles ye wad ne'er envy 'em.
It 's true they needna starve or sweat,
Through winter's cauld, or simmer's heat;
They 've nae sair wark to craze their banes,
And fill auld age wi' grips and granes;
But human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges and schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They mak enow themsel's to vex them;
And aye the less they hae to sturt them, molest
In like proportion less will hurt them.

A country fellow at the plough,
His acre 's tilled, he 's right eneugh;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzen 's done, she 's unco weel:
But Gentlemen, and Ladies warst,
Wi' even-down want o' wark are curst.
They loiter, lounging, lank, and lazy;
Though deil haet ails them, yet uneasy;
Their days insipid, dull, and tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang, and restless.

And e'en their sports, their balls and races,
Their galloping through public places,
There 's sic parade, sic pomp, and art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

The men cast out in party matches,
Then sowther a' in deep debauches;
Ae night they 're mad wi' drink and w—ing,
Niest day their life is past enduring.

The Ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great and gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,
They 're a' run deils and jads thegither.
Whyles o'er the wee bit cup and platie,
They sip the scandal potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks,
Pore owre the devil's pictured beuks;

Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
And cheat like ony unhanged blackguard.

There 's some exception, man and woman;
But this is Gentry's life in common.

By this, the sun was out o' sight,
And darker gloaming brought the night:
The bum-clock hummed wi' lazy drone; beetle
The kye stood rowtin' i' the loan;
When up they gat, and shook their lugs,
Rejoiced they were na men, but dogs;
And each took aff his several way,
Resolved to meet some ither day.

TO A LOUSE,

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.[1]

Ha! where ye gaun, ye crawlin' ferlie? wonder
Your impudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt rarely strut
Owre gauze and lace;
Though faith, I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,
Detested, shunned, by saunt and sinner,
How dare you set your fit upon her,
Sae fine a lady?
Gae somewhere else, and seek your dinner
On some poor body.

Swith, in some beggar's haffet squattle; cheek
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle
Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare horn nor bane ne'er daur unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud you there, ye 're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rels, snug and tight; ribbon-ends
Na, faith ye yet! ye 'll no be right
Till ye 've got on it,
The very tapmost, towering height
O' Miss's bonnet.

[1] The 'lady' here referred to was merely a village belle: her name is mentioned at Mauchline; but the reader will acknowledge that it ought not to be recorded in print. The poem exhibits descriptive power, but most persons would probably have wished it not written, but for the last stanza, which has become proverbial.

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,
As plump and gray as ony grozet; gooseberry
Oh for some rank, mercurial rozet,
Or fell, red smeddum, powder
I'd gie you sic a hearty doze o't,
Wad dress your droddum! breech

I wad na been surprised to spy
You on an auld wife's flannen toy; cap
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,
On 's wyliecoat;
But Miss's fine Lunardi! fie![1]
How daur ye do't?

Oh, Jenny, dinna toss your head,
And set your beauties a' abread!
Ye little ken what cursèd speed
The blastie's makin'!
Thae winks and finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takin'!

Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress and gait wad lea'e us,
And even devotion!

The Twa Herds had brought Burns into the friendship of John Goudie and others of the townsmen of Black John Russell, and he appears, before February 1786, to have paid several visits to Kilmarnock. A local work[2] relates an anecdote which may be generally, though not in every particular, true—that Goudie called one day on Burns at Mossgiel during harvest, and that Burns went out with him, and sitting down behind a *stook*, read to his visitor several of his poems. Goudie, delighted with what he heard, threw out hints of a desire to get the poems published, and invited the bard to visit him at Kilmarnock. There, it is said, Burns met at Goudie's table a group of the better class of people living in the town—the town-clerk Paterson, a Dr Hamilton, Major Parker, banker; Dr William Moore; and Mr Robert Muir, merchant. He appeared amongst these respectables in his simple

[1] Lunardi made several ascents in his balloon in Scotland in 1785, and gave rise to a kind of bonnet bearing his name.

[2] *The Contemporaries of Burns.*

hodden gray, but doubtless astonished them by his wit and his verses. As visitors of Goudie, we cannot doubt that they were most of them partisans of the New Light. What immediately followed from the visit to Goudie we cannot tell: apparently, any wish that may have been formed either by the arch-heretic himself or any of his friends to get the poems published, did not come to any immediate effect.

At this time, by the death of a moderate clergyman named Mutrie, there was much excitement in Kilmarnock, it being uncertain whether the patron would appoint a moderate or a *high-flier* in his place. When it was learned that the appointment had been settled in favour of the Reverend James Mackinlay, a young scion of the zealous party, there was great joy throughout that camp. They remembered how a moderate—or, as Burns called it, a common-sense divinity—had come into their precincts twenty years before, with Mutrie's predecessor, Lindsay, and much they bewailed the effects of so long a predominance of error. But now this place was to be taken by one who might be expected to do much to repair the evil. The moderates were proportionately vexed. To console them as far as possible, Burns composed a poem containing an anticipatory view of the approaching ceremony, by which Mackinlay was to be introduced to his cure.[1]

THE ORDINATION.

'For sense they little owe to frugal Heaven—
To please the mob, they hide the little given.'

Kilmarnock wabsters, fidge and claw,
And pour your creeshie nations;
And ye wha leather rax and draw,
O' a' denominations,[2]
Swith to the Laigh Kirk, ane an a',
And there tak up your stations;
Then aff to Begbie's[3] in a raw,
And pour divine libations
For joy this day.

[1] The actual ordination of Mackinlay did not take place till the 6th April 1786.

[2] Kilmarnock was then a town of between three and four thousand inhabitants, most of whom were engaged in the manufacture of carpets, and other coarse woollen goods, or in the preparation of leather.

[3] A tavern near the church.

Curst Common Sense, that imp o' h—,
  Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder;[1]
But Oliphant aft made her yell,
  And Russell sair misca'd her;[2]
This day Mackinlay taks the flail,
  And he 's the boy will blaud her! — slap
He 'll clap a shangan on her tail, — cleft stick
  And set the bairns to daud her — bespatter
    Wi' dirt this day.

Mak haste and turn King David owre,
  And lilt wi' holy clangor;
O' double verse come gie us four,
  And skirl up the Bangor:
This day the Kirk kicks up a stoure, — dust
  Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her,
For Heresy is in her power,
  And gloriously she 'll whang her
    Wi' pith this day.

Come, let a proper text be read,
  And touch it aff wi' vigour,
How graceless Ham[3] leugh at his dad,
  Which made Canaan a nigger;

[1] There was a popular notion that Mr Lindsay had been indebted for his presentation from the patron, Lord Glencairn, to his wife, Margaret Lauder, who was believed, but, I am assured, erroneously, to have been his lordship's housekeeper. Mr Lindsay's induction, in 1764, was so much in opposition to the sentiments of the people, that it produced a riot, attended by many outrages. Three young men, who had distinguished themselves by their violence, were whipped through Ayr, and imprisoned a month. These circumstances evoked from a shoemaker, named Hunter, a scoffing ballad, to which Burns alludes in his original note on this passage, and which may be found in the *History of Kilmarnock*, by Archibald M'Kay: 1848.

The violence of the people was so extreme at the attempted induction of Mr Lindsay, as to put an effectual stop to the proceedings of the presbytery. The clergy dispersed in terror. A whimsical anecdote connected with the affair was related by the late William Aiton of Hamilton:—The minister of Fenwick fled in trepidation, and, mounting his horse, proceeded to ride home, with the fearful scene still occupying his excited imagination. It happened that an English commercial traveller was at the same time leaving the town on his way to Glasgow. He asked the road, which was then somewhat difficult to find, and very bad when it was found. 'Keep after that man for the first four miles, and ye cannot go wrong,' said the people. The minister, finding a horseman following him very hard, thought it was an outraged Calvinist. He clapped the spurs to his beast, and flew faster than before. The Englishman, fearful to lose his way, put his horse to speed too, and then the affair became a John Gilpin scamper, only with two actors instead of one. At last the poor minister turned down a lane to one of his farmers, on whom he called in desperation to bring out his people and save his life. The Englishman, following close up, rode into the farmyard at the same moment, when, instead of a deadly combat on theological grounds, there took place only an explanation. The whole party enjoyed the joke so much, that the farmer insisted on keeping the stranger as his guest for the night, with the minister to help away the toddy.

[2] Oliphant and Russell were Kilmarnock ministers of the zealous party. [3] Genesis, ix. 22.

Or Phinehas[1] drove the murdering blade,
  With w— abhorring rigour;
Or Zipporah,[2] the scauldin' jad,
  Was like a bluidy tiger
    I' the inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
  And bind him down wi' caution,
That stipend is a carnal weed
  He taks but for the fashion;
And gie him owre the flock to feed,
  And punish each transgression;
Especial, rams that cross the breed,
  Gie them sufficient threshin',
    Spare them nae day.

Now, auld Kilmarnock, cock thy tail,
  And toss thy horns fu' canty; merry
Nae mair thou 'll rowte out-owre the dale, low
  Because thy pasture 's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' gospel kail
  Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
And runts o' grace the pick and wale, cabbage stems
  No gien by way o' dainty,
    But ilka day.

Nae mair by Babel's streams we 'll weep,
  To think upon our Zion;
And hing our fiddles up to sleep,
  Like baby-clouts a-dryin':
Come, screw the pegs, wi' tunefu' cheep,
  And o'er the thairms be tryin';
Oh, rare! to see our elbucks wheep,
  And a' like lamb-tails flyin'
    Fu' fast this day.

Lang, Patronage, wi' rod o' airn, iron
  Has shored the Kirk's undoin', menaced
As lately Fenwick, sair forfairn, distressed
  Has proven to its ruin:[3]

[1] Numbers, xxv. 8.

[2] Exodus, iv. 25.

[3] Allusion is here made to the long-disputed settlement of Mr William Boyd as minister of the parish of Fenwick. The people being prejudiced against him as a moderate, or as one brought forward by that party, his nomination was combated as long as possible; but he was at length ordained in the council-chamber of Irvine, June 25, 1782. Mr Boyd afterwards became an acceptable pastor to his flock, over whom he presided till his death at an advanced age in 1828.

Our patron, honest man! Glencairn,
  He saw mischief was brewin',
And like a godly elect bairn
  He 's waled us out a true ane,
    And sound this day.

Now, Robertson,[1] harangue nae mair,
  But steek your gab for ever; close—mouth
Or try the wicked town of Ayr,
  For there they 'll think you clever;
Or, nae reflection on your lear, learning
  Ye may commence a shaver;
Or to the Netherton[2] repair,
  And turn a carpet-weaver
    Aff-hand this day.

Mutrie[3] and you were just a match,
  We never had sic twa drones:
Auld Hornie did the Laigh Kirk watch,
  Just like a winkin' baudrons: cat
And aye he catched the tither wretch,
  To fry them in his caudrons:
But now his honour maun detach,
  Wi' a his brimstone squadrons,
    Fast, fast this day.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes
  She 's swingein through the city:
Hark how the nine-tailed cat she plays!
  I vow it 's unco pretty:
There Learning, with his Greekish face,
  Grunts out some Latin ditty,
And Common Sense is gaun, she says,
  To mak to Jamie Beattie[4]
    Her plaint this day.

But there 's Morality himsel'
  Embracing all opinions,
Hear how he gies the tither yell,
  Between his twa companions;

[1] The colleague of the newly-ordained clergyman—a moderate.

[2] A portion of the town of Kilmarnock.

[3] The deceased clergyman whom Mr Mackinlay succeeded.

[4] Probably the well-known author of the *Essay on Truth* is here meant. Local antiquaries are unable to give any other explanation.

See how she peels the skin and fell,
As ane were peelin' onions!
Now there—they 're packèd aff to h—,
And banished our dominions
Henceforth this day.

Oh happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
Come bouse about the porter!
Morality's demure decoys
Shall here nae mair find quarter:
Mackinlay, Russell, are the boys
That heresy can torture:
They 'll gie her on a rape a hoyse,
And cowe her measure shorter
By th' head some day.

Come, bring the tither mutchkin in,
And here 's for a conclusion,
To every New Light mother's son,
From this time forth, Confusion:
If mair they deave us wi' their din,
Or Patronage intrusion,
We 'll light a spunk, and every skin match
We 'll rin them aff in fusion,
Like oil some day.[1]

We venture, on conjecture, to refer to this period a poem containing some lines calculated to engrave themselves on the heart, but which did not see the light till after the fame of Burns was established:—

AN ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID, OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

'My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them aye thegither:
The Rigid Righteous is a fool,
The Rigid Wise anither.
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some pyles o' caff in;
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o' daffin.'
SOLOMON.—Eccles. vii. 16.

Oh ye wha are sae guid yoursel',
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye 've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebour's fauts and folly!

[1] Mackinlay became a favourite preacher, very much, it is said, in consequence of his 'fine manner,' for he had little variety of illustration. He survived till 1841, attaining the patriarchal age of eighty-five years. A newspaper obituary notice informs us, that he was a native of the parish of Douglas, in Lanarkshire, and entered life as 'tutor' in the family of Sir William Cunningham of Windyhill, by whose influence with the Earl of Glencairn he obtained the presentation to the second charge of Kilmarnock.

Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
  Supplied wi' store o' water,
The heapèd happer 's ebbing still,
  And still the clap plays clatter.

Hear me, ye venerable core,
  As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
  For glaikit Folly's portals; idle
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
  Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes, unlucky
  Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compared,
  And shudder at the niffer, exchange
But cast a moment's fair regard,
  What maks the mighty differ?
Discount what scant occasion gave
  That purity ye pride in,
And (what 's aft mair than a' the lave) rest
  Your better art o' hiding.

Think, when your castigated pulse
  Gies now and then a wallop,
What ragings must his veins convulse,
  That still eternal gallop;
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
  Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
  It makes an unco lee-way.

See Social Life and Glee sit down,
  All joyous and unthinking,
Till, quite transmugrified, they 're grown
  Debauchery and Drinking:
Oh would they stay to calculate
  Th' eternal consequences;
Or your more dreaded hell to state,
  Damnation of expenses!

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,
  Tied up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor Frailty names,
  Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear-loved lad, convenience snug,
  A treacherous inclination—
But, let me whisper i' your lug,
  Ye 're aiblins nae temptation. perhaps

Then gently scan your brother man,
  Still gentler sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang, small matter
  To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
  The moving why they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark
  How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
  Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord—its various tone,
  Each spring—its various bias:
Then at the balance let 's be mute,
  We never can adjust it;
What 's done we partly may compute,
  But know not what 's resisted.

The productions of this busy winter had not been confined to Burns's desk or table-drawer at Mossgiel. There were intelligent men around him, to whom he might communicate them, with a view to obtaining their opinion—his excellent patron Hamilton, his bosom friend clever little James Smith, his shrewd medical attendant Mackenzie, the Kilmarnock respectables afore-described, various clergymen, and, finally, Robert Aiken, perhaps the most sensible of all to the charms of divine poesy. This Mr Aiken, to whom Burns has given the immortality of a dedication of his *Cotter's Saturday Night*, was a legal practitioner—Scottice, *writer*—and also a surveyor of taxes, in the town of Ayr. Such was his external position in life: the internal man presents us with warm affections, a cultivated mind, and a power of eloquence most extraordinary for his place and time. We have seen Holy Willie adverting to the effects of his harangue in the case of Gavin Hamilton before the Ayr presbytery. It was, however, when he poured forth the sentiments of a warm and affectionate heart, that Aiken exercised his highest power. His feelings were like those of Burns himself. As an example: some years after the death of Burns, a gentleman, walking out with Mr Aiken to celebrate the 25th of January at Alloway Kirk, produced an ode to the memory of the poet, which he had composed for the occasion. Aiken read a few verses, and walked on in advance without speaking. At last he said in a faltering tone: 'That will do. There are two criteria by which I judge of the merits of a production of this kind—first, my eyes are suffused; next, the buttons

of my waistcoat *skelp*.' His vest had actually, like Andrew Lammie's in the old ballad, burst open! He once had occasion, at a large party, to make a speech in answer to a toast, his uncle, the Rev. Dr Dalrymple, being also present. He addressed his venerable relative in such moving terms as to draw tears from every eye. An Irish officer who was present caught the infection, wiped his cheeks, and looking round the company, said: 'Now, can anybody tell me what is the *maning* of all this?' Such was the man whose notice Burns had now attracted. Can we wonder that two such men should have speedily become much attached to each other, all disparity of worldly condition notwithstanding. Burns committed many of his poems to the care of Mr Aiken, and Aiken read them to all whom he thought likely to appreciate them, giving them the benefit of a style of elocution which is allowed to have been of wonderful effect. Burns himself says: 'Mr Aiken read me into fame.' Thus we see, that even before he had published his poems, he could not be considered as 'a bard of no regard' in at least his native district. It was with perfect truth that he made Coila say in *The Vision*—

——— now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends,
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

We have a glimpse of Burns's situation and his doings in February 1786 in a letter

TO MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.[1]

MOSSGIEL, *February* 17, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—I have not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I shall only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have enclosed you a piece of rhyming-ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the Muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, *The Ordination*, a poem on Mr M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; *Scotch Drink*, a poem; *The Cotter's Saturday Night; An Address to the Devil*, &c. I have likewise completed my poem on the *Dogs*, but have not shewn it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr Aiken in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Fergusson, by Connel, and I will remit you the money. I have no news to acquaint you with about Mauchline; they are just going on in the old way. I have some very important news with respect to myself, not the most agreeable—news that I

[1] Richmond had gone to the capital in November, to pursue his legal studies in a writer's office there.

am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith; he is the only friend I have now in Mauchline. I can scarcely forgive your long neglect of me, and I beg you will let me hear from you regularly by Connel. If you would act your part as a friend, I am sure neither good nor bad fortune should strange or alter me. Excuse haste, as I got yours but yesterday. I am, my dear sir, yours, ROBERT BURNESS.

THE INVENTORY.

IN ANSWER TO A MANDATE BY THE SURVEYOR OF THE TAXES.[1]

Sir, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list
O' gudes and gear, and a' my graith,
To which I 'm clear to gie my aith.

Imprimis, then, for carriage-cattle,
I have four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew afore a pettle. plough-stick
My han' afore 's[2] a gude auld has-been,
And wight and wilfu' a' his days been,
My han' ahin 's[3] a weel-gaun filly,
That aft has borne me hame frae Killie,[4]
And your auld burro' monie a time,
In days when riding was nae crime—
But ance, whan in my wooing pride,
I like a blockhead boost to ride,
The wilfu' creature sae I pat to
(L—, pardon all my sins, and that too!)
I played my filly sic a shavie,
She 's a' bedevil'd wi' the spavie.
My fur ahin 's[5] a wordy beast, worthy
As e'er in tug or tow was traced.
The fourth 's a Highland Donald hastie,
A d—d red wud Kilburnie blastie![6]

[1] In May 1785, in order to liquidate ten millions of unfunded debt, Mr Pitt made a considerable addition to the number of taxed articles, amongst which were female-servants. The poem seems to have been called forth by the bard's receipt of the next annual mandate from Mr Aiken of Ayr, surveyor of taxes for the district.

[2] The fore-horse on the left hand in the plough.

[3] The hindmost on the left hand in the plough.

[4] Kilmarnock.

[5] The hindmost horse on the right hand in the plough.

[6] Burns had bought this horse at a Kilburnie fair, from one William Kirkwood, a noted horsecouper, who lived at Baillieston in that neighbourhood, and who realised a fortune by his trade.—*Correspondent.*

Forbye a cowte o' cowtes the wale, colt—choice
As ever ran afore a tail,
If he be spared to be a beast,
He 'll draw me fifteen pun' at least—
Wheel-carriages I hae but few,
Three carts, and twa are feckly new; mostly
Ae auld wheelbarrow, mair for token
Ae leg and baith the trams are broken;
I made a poker o' the spin'le,
And my auld mither brunt the trin'le. wheel

For men I 've three mischievous boys,
Run deils for rantin' and for noise;
A gaudsman ane, a thrasher t'other,
Wee Davock hauds the nowt in fother.
I rule them, as I ought, discreetly,
And aften labour them completely;
And aye on Sundays duly, nightly,
I on the Questions targe them tightly;
Till, faith, wee Davock 's turned sae gleg,
Though scarcely langer than your leg,
He 'll screed you aff Effectual Calling,[1]
As fast as ony in the dwalling.
I 've nane in female servin' station
(L— keep me aye frae a' temptation!)
I hae nae wife—and that my bliss is,
And ye have laid nae tax on misses.
Wi' weans I 'm mair than weel contented,
Heaven sent me ane mae than I wanted.
My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,[2]
She stares the daddy in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace;
But her, my bonny sweet wee lady,
I 've paid enough for her already,
And gin ye tax her or her mither,
B' the L—! ye 'se get them a' thegither.

And now, remember, Mr Aiken,
Nae kind of licence out I 'm takin'; * * *
My travel a' on foot I 'll shank it,
I 've sturdy bearers, Gude be thankit. * * *
Sae dinna put me in your buke,
Nor for my ten white shillings luke.

[1] In the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines—universally used in Scotland, and commonly called *The Questions*—*What is Effectual Calling?* is one of the interrogations.

[2] The poet's child, then an inmate of Mossgiel, and about fifteen months old.

This list wi' my ain hand I 've wrote it,
The day and date as under noted;
Then know all ye whom it concerns,
Subscripsi huic, ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, *February* 22, 1786.

The letter which follows was the consequence of a request for a sight of his *Cotter's Saturday Night*, from a person named John Kennedy, who then resided as clerk or sub-factor at Dumfries House, the seat of the Earl of Dumfries, a few miles from Mauchline.[1] It is characteristic of the frankness of Burns, and expresses some of his predominant feelings:—

TO MR JOHN KENNEDY.

MOSSGIEL, 3d *March* 1786.

SIR—I have done myself the pleasure of complying with your request in sending you my Cottager. If you have a leisure minute, I should be glad you would copy it, and return me either the original or the transcript, as I have not a copy of it by me, and I have a friend who wishes to see it.

Now, Kennedy, if foot or horse
E'er bring you in by Mauchline Corse,[2]
L—, man, there 's lasses there wad force
A hermit's fancy;
And down the gate, in faith, they 're worse,
And mair unchancy.

But, as I 'm sayin', please step to Dow's,
And taste sic gear as Johnnie brews,
Till some bit callan bring me news — boy
That you are there;
And if we dinna haud a bouze,
I 'se ne'er drink mair.

It 's no I like to sit and swallow,
Then like a swine to puke and wallow;
But gie me just a true guid fallow,
Wi' right engine
And spunkie, ance to make us mellow, — lively
And then we 'll shine.

Now, if ye 're ane o' warld's folk,
Wha rate the wearer by the cloak,

[1] Mr Kennedy was subsequently employed as factor by the Marquis of Breadalbane.

[2] The market-cross of the village.

And sklent on poverty their joke, glance
Wi' bitter sneer,
Wi' you no friendship will I troke, exchange
Nor cheap nor dear.

But if, as I 'm informèd weel,
Ye hate, as ill 's the very deil,
The flinty heart that canna feel,
Come, sir, here 's tae you!
Hae, there 's my han', I wiss you weel,
And guid be wi' you! R. B.

TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

MOSSGIEL, *20th March* 1786.

DEAR SIR—I am heartily sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as you returned through Mauchline; but as I was engaged, I could not be in town before the evening.

I here enclose you my *Scotch Drink*, and 'may the —— follow with a blessing for your edification.' I hope, some time before we hear the gowk,[1] to have the pleasure of seeing you at Kilmarnock, when I intend we shall have a gill between us in a mutchkin-stoup, which will be a great comfort and consolation to, dear sir, your humble servant, ROBERT BURNESS.

We now approach a most painful chapter in the poet's history. It may be best to break ground by presenting the remainder of his autobiographical narrative:—

'I now began,' he says, 'to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my *Holy Fair*. I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause. *Holy Willie's Prayer* next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery, if haply any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my wanderings led me on another side, within point-blank shot of their heaviest

[1] The cuckoo.

metal. This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to my printed poem, *The Lament*. This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart and mistaken the reckoning of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother—in truth, it was only nominally mine—and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. But before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power: I thought they had merit; and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver; or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits. I can truly say that, *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favour. It ever was my opinion that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance of themselves. To know myself had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone—I balanced myself with others—I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet—I studied assiduously Nature's design in my formation—where the lights and shades in my character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas—the price of wafting me to the torrid zone—I took a steerage-passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde; for

"Hungry ruin had me in the wind."

'I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia

—*The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast*—when a letter from Dr Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition. The doctor belonged to a set of critics for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion, that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind Providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest of men—the Earl of Glencairn. *Oublie moi, Grand Dieu, si jamais je l'oublie!*

'I need relate no further. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to *catch* the characters and *the manners living as they rise*. Whether I have profited, time will shew.'. . . .

The commencement of Burns's acquaintance with his Jean has been already touched upon. This young woman had now been for upwards of a year the goddess of his idolatry. He had, rather oddly, written no songs which can be certainly traced as in her honour; but he had expressed his admiration of her in his *Epistle to Davie*, in the *Address to the Deil*, and *The Vision*. When it appeared, in the spring of 1786, that love had become transgression, Burns and his brother were beginning to fear that their farm would prove a ruinous concern. He yielded, nevertheless, to the wish of his unhappy partner to acknowledge her as his wife, and thus repair as far as possible the consequences of their error. He gave her such an acknowledgment in writing—a document sufficient in the law of Scotland to constitute what is called an irregular, though perfectly valid, marriage. Jean probably expected that, if her parents were first made acquainted with her fault by the announcement of clandestine nuptials, they would look more mildly upon it; for such is a common course of circumstances in her rank in life in Scotland. But it was otherwise in this case. Knowing well that Burns was not in flourishing circumstances, it appeared to the father that marriage, so far from mending the matter, made it worse.

Burns came forward on this occasion with all the manliness which his character would have led us to expect. He admitted the hopelessness of his present circumstances; but he offered to

go out to Jamaica in the hope of bettering them, and of coming home in a few years and claiming Jean as his wife. If this plan should not meet Mr Armour's approbation, he was willing to descend even to the condition of a common labourer, in order to furnish means for the present support of his wife and her expected offspring. It does not seem to have been one of his hopes that the wondrous poems lying in the table-drawer at Mossgiel could help in aught to lighten the burden he was willing to incur. Mr Armour met every proposal with rejection. The course he took will only be intelligible if we reflect that in Scottish village-life there is little of the delicacy as to female purity which prevails in more refined circles. Armour reflected that his daughter, if free from her connection with the ill-starred poet, might yet hope for a comfortable settlement in life. He therefore announced his resolution, if possible, to annul the marriage, such as it was. Yielding to his demand, probably preferred in no mild mood, Jean surrendered the paper to her angry father, by whom it was placed in the hands of Mr Aiken of Ayr. There were some violent and distressing scenes between the parties. Not endowed by nature with very deep or abiding feelings, and depressed in spirit by the sense of her error, Jean, to the utter confusion of Burns, appeared less willing to cleave to her husband than to her father. The poet viewed her conduct with deep resentment, and was thrown by it into a state of mind which, according to his own confession, 'had very nearly given him one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart and mistaken the reckoning of rationality.'

He instantly made up his mind to exile from his much-loved country. His poverty and imprudence made that course desirable; and after the mortification he had met with, he had no longer the wish to stay at home. He therefore agreed with a Dr Douglas to go out to Jamaica as a book-keeper on his estate. To raise money for his passage, Mr Hamilton advised him to publish his poems by subscription, believing that his name had already secured him a sufficient number of friends to make the sale of a small volume certain, and to a moderate extent profitable. We have seen, from many expressions in the poems of the past winter, that Burns was in a state of mind regarding them to make this plan highly acceptable to him. Accordingly, without any loss of time, proposals or subscription-papers were thrown off and circulated amongst the friends of the unfortunate bard.

There are a few letters appropriate to this period, and several poems, which do more than anything else could to illustrate the state of their author's mind.

TO MR AIKEN.

MOSSGIEL, 3d *April* 1786.

DEAR SIR—I received your kind letter with double pleasure, on account of the second flattering instance of Mrs C.'s notice and approbation. I assure you I

'Turn out the brunt side o' my shin,'

as the famous Ramsay, of jingling memory, says, at such a patroness. Present her my most grateful acknowledgments, in your very best manner of telling truth. I have inscribed the following stanza on the blank-leaf of Miss More's works :—

Thou flattering mark of friendship kind,
Still may thy pages call to mind
  The dear, the beauteous Donor:
Though sweetly female every part,
Yet such a head, and more the heart,
  Does both the sexes honour.
She shewed her taste refined and just
  When she selected thee,
Yet deviating own I must,
  In sae approving me;
    But kind still, I 'll mind still
      The Giver in the gift—
    I 'll bless her, and wiss her
      A friend aboon the lift.

My proposals for publishing I am just going to send to the press. I expect to hear from you by the first opportunity. I am ever, dear sir, yours, ROBERT BURNESS.

TO [JOHN BALLANTYNE, ESQ., AYR?]

[*Between* 3d *and* 17*th April* 1786?]

HONOURED SIR—My proposals came to hand last night, and knowing that you would wish to have it in your power to do me a service as early as anybody, I enclose you half a sheet of them. I must consult you, first opportunity, on the propriety of sending my quondam friend, Mr Aiken, a copy. If he is now reconciled to my character as an honest man, I would do it with all my soul; but I would not be beholden to the noblest being ever God created, if he imagined me to be a rascal. Apropos, old Mr Armour prevailed with him to mutilate that unlucky paper yesterday.

Would you believe it?—though I had not a hope, nor even a wish, to make her mine after her conduct, yet, when he told me the names were all out of the paper, my heart died within me, and he cut my veins with the news. * * * R. B.

At this particular crisis the poet changed the spelling of his name from Burness, as his father had written it, to the orthography common in Ayrshire.

TO MR M'WHINNIE, WRITER, AYR.

MOSSGIEL, 17*th April* 1786.

It is injuring some hearts, those hearts that elegantly bear the impression of the good Creator, to say to them you give them the trouble of obliging a friend; for this reason, I only tell you that I gratify my own feelings in requesting your friendly offices with respect to the enclosed,[1] because I know it will gratify yours to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

I have sent you four copies, as I have no less than eight dozen, which is a great deal more than I shall ever need.

Be sure to remember a poor poet militant in your prayers. He looks forward with fear and trembling to that, to him, important moment which stamps the die with—with—with, perhaps, the eternal disgrace of, my dear sir, your humble, afflicted, tormented, ROBERT BURNS.

TO MR JOHN KENNEDY.

MOSSGIEL, 20*th April* 1786.

SIR—By some neglect in Mr Hamilton, I did not hear of your kind request for a subscription-paper till this day. I will not attempt any acknowledgment for this, nor the manner in which I see your name in Mr Hamilton's subscription-list. Allow me only to say, sir, I feel the weight of the debt.

I have here likewise enclosed a small piece, the very latest of my productions. I am a good deal pleased with some sentiments myself, as they are just the native querulous feelings of a heart which, as the elegantly melting Gray says, 'melancholy has marked for her own.'

Our race comes on apace—that much expected scene of revelry and mirth; but to me it brings no joy equal to that meeting with which you last flattered the expectation of, sir, your indebted humble servant, R. B.

The following is the piece above alluded to. In the copy sent

[1] A prospectus of the poems.

to Mr Kennedy, it is entitled *The Gowan;* the English appellation was subsequently adopted:—

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY,

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN APRIL 1786.[1]

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,
Thou 's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my power,
Thou bonny gem.

Alas! it 's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonny lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward-springing, blithe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth — glanced
Amid the storm,
Scarce reared above the parent earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield:
But thou, beneath the random bield — protection
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field, — dry
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet floweret of the rural shade!

[1] 'The address *To a Mountain Daisy turned down with the Plough* is of the same nature with the address *To a Mouse*, but inferior in point of originality, as well as in the interest produced. To extract out of a train of incidents so common and seemingly so trivial as these, so fine a train of sentiment and imagery, is the surest proof, as well as the most brilliant triumph, of original genius.'—CURRIE.

By love's simplicity betrayed,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soiled, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering worth is given,
Who long with wants and woes has striven,
By human pride or cunning driven
To misery's brink,
Till wrenched of every stay but Heaven,
He, ruined, sink!

Even thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom.

LAMENT,

OCCASIONED BY THE UNFORTUNATE ISSUE OF A FRIEND'S AMOUR.

'Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself,
And sweet affection prove the spring of wo!'—HOME.

Oh thou pale orb, that silent shines,
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!
Thou seest a wretch who inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With wo I nightly vigils keep
Beneath thy wan, unwarming beam;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How life and love are all a dream.

I joyless view thy rays adorn
The faintly-markèd distant hill:
I joyless view thy trembling horn
Reflected in the gurgling rill:
My fondly-fluttering heart be still!
Thou busy power, remembrance, cease!
Ah! must the agonising thrill
For ever bar returning peace!

No idly-feigned poetic pains
  My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
  No fabled tortures, quaint and tame:
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;
  The oft-attested Powers above;
The promised father's tender name;
  These were the pledges of my love!

Encircled in her clasping arms,
  How have the raptured moments flown!
How have I wished for fortune's charms
  For her dear sake, and hers alone!
And must I think it!—is she gone,
  My secret heart's exulting boast?
And does she heedless hear my groan?
  And is she ever, ever lost?

Oh can she bear so base a heart,
  So lost to honour, lost to truth,
As from the fondest lover part,
  The plighted husband of her youth!
Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!
  Her way may lie through rough distress!
Then who her pangs and pains will soothe,
  Her sorrows share, and make them less?

Ye wingèd hours that o'er us passed,
  Enraptured more, the more enjoyed,
Your dear remembrance in my breast,
  My fondly-treasured thoughts employed.
That breast, how dreary now, and void,
  For her too scanty once of room!
Even every ray of hope destroyed,
  And not a wish to gild the gloom!

The morn that warns th' approaching day,
  Awakes me up to toil and wo:
I see the hours in long array,
  That I must suffer, lingering, slow.
Full many a pang, and many a throe,
  Keen recollection's direful train,
Must wring my soul ere Phœbus, low,
  Shall kiss the distant western main.

And when my nightly couch I try,
  Sore harassed out with care and grief,
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye
  Keep watchings with the nightly thief:

Or if I slumber, fancy, chief,
  Reigns haggard-wild in sore affright:
Even day, all bitter, brings relief
  From such a horror-breathing night.

Oh thou bright queen, who o'er th' expanse,
  Now highest reign'st, with boundless sway!
Oft has thy silent-marking glance
  Observed us, fondly-wandering, stray!
The time, unheeded, sped away,
  While love's luxurious pulse beat high,
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray,
  To mark the mutual kindling eye.

Oh scenes in strong remembrance set!
  Scenes never, never to return!
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
  Again I feel, again I burn!
From every joy and pleasure torn,
  Life's weary vale I 'll wander through;
And hopeless, comfortless, I 'll mourn
  A faithless woman's broken vow.

DESPONDENCY:

AN ODE.

Oppressod with grief, oppressed with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
  I set me down and sigh:
Oh life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough, a weary road,
  To wretches such as I!
Dim-backward as I cast my view,
  What sickening scenes appear!
What sorrows yet may pierce me through,
  Too justly I may fear!
    Still caring, despairing,
      Must be my bitter doom;
    My woes here shall close ne'er
      But with the closing tomb!

Happy, ye sons of busy life,
Who, equal to the bustling strife,
  No other view regard!
Even when the wishèd end 's denied,
Yet while the busy means are plied,
  They bring their own reward:

Whilst I, a hope-abandoned wight,
  Unfitted with an aim,
Meet every sad returning night
  And joyless morn the same;
    You, bustling, and justling,
      Forget each grief and pain;
    I, listless, yet restless,
      Find every prospect vain.

How blest the solitary's lot,
Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot,
  Within his humble cell,
The cavern wild with tangling roots,
Sits o'er his newly-gathered fruits,
  Beside his crystal well!
Or haply to his evening thought,
  By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
  A faint collected dream;
    While praising, and raising
      His thoughts to Heaven on high,
    As wand'ring, meand'ring,
      He views the solemn sky.

Than I, no lonely hermit placed,
Where never human footstep traced,
  Less fit to play the part;
The lucky moment to improve,
And just to stop, and just to move,
  With self-respecting art.
But ah! those pleasures, loves, and joys,
  Which I too keenly taste,
The solitary can despise,
  Can want, and yet be blest!
    He needs not, he heeds not,
      Or human love or hate,
    Whilst I here, must cry here
      At perfidy ingrate!

Oh enviable, early days,
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,
  To care, to guilt unknown!
How ill exchanged for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes,
  Of others, or my own!
Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
  Like linnets in the bush,
Ye little know the ills ye court,
  When manhood is your wish!

The losses, the crosses,
  That active man engage!
The fears all, the tears all,
  Of dim declining age.

TO RUIN.

All hail! inexorable lord!
At whose destruction-breathing word
  The mightiest empires fall!
Thy cruel, wo-delighted train,
The ministers of grief and pain,
  A sullen welcome, all!
With stern-resolved, despairing eye,
  I see each aimèd dart;
For one has cut my dearest tie,
  And quivers in my heart.
    Then lowering and pouring,
      The storm no more I dread;
    Though thick'ning and black'ning
      Round my devoted head.

And thou grim Power, by life abhorred,
While life a pleasure can afford,
  Oh hear a wretch's prayer!
No more I shrink appalled, afraid;
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,
  To close this scene of care!
When shall my soul, in silent peace,
  Resign life's joyless day;
My weary heart its throbbings cease,
  Cold mouldering in the clay?
    No fear more, no tear more,
      To stain my lifeless face;
    Enclaspèd and graspèd
      Within thy cold embrace!

SONG.

Again rejoicing Nature sees
  Her robe assume its vernal hues;
Her leafy locks wave in the breeze,
  All freshly steeped in morning dews.[1]

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
  In vain to me the violets spring;
In vain to me, in glen or shaw,
  The mavis and the lintwhite sing.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
  Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks;
But life to me 's a weary dream,
  A dream of ane that never wauks.

The wanton coot the water skims,
  Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,
The stately swan majestic swims,
  And everything is blest but I.

The shepherd steeks his faulding slap,
  And owre the moorland whistles shrill;
Wi' wild, unequal, wandering step,
  I meet him on the dewy hill.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
  Blithe waukens by the daisy's side,
And mounts and sings on flittering wings,
  A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.[2]

Come, Winter, with thine angry howl,
  And raging bend the naked tree:
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
  When Nature all is sad like me!

The wretchedness breathed in these poems is of too extreme a character to have been long predominant, at least in all its force, in such a mind as that of Burns. At the beginning of May, he is found addressing Mr Hamilton in playful terms respecting a

[1] Burns, on publishing this song in his first Edinburgh edition, 1787, admitted into it a chorus from a song written by a gentleman of that city:

'And maun I still on Menie doat,
  And bear the scorn that 's in her e'e,
For it 's jet jet black, and it 's like a hawk,
  And it winna let a body be!'

This doggrel interferes so sadly with the strain of Burns's beautiful ode, that the present editor felt compelled to extrude it. He hopes it will never hereafter be replaced.

[2] The resemblance of this verse to a passage in the *Mountain Daisy* will be observed.

servant-boy, whom that gentleman had talked of taking off his hands, and who in the meantime had been spoken to with a view to engagement by a person whom Burns did not so much esteem:

NOTE TO GAVIN HAMILTON.

MOSGAVILLE,[1] *May* 3, 1786.

I hold it, sir, my bounden duty,
To warn you how that Master Tootie,
  Alias, Laird M'Gaun,
Was here to hire yon lad away
'Bout whom ye spak the tither day,
  And wad hae done 't aff han': — instantly
But lest he learn the callan tricks, — boy
  As, faith, I muckle doubt him,
Like scrapin' out auld Crummie's nicks,[2]
  And tellin' lies about them;
    As lieve then, I 'd have then, — willingly
      Your clerkship he should sair, — serve
    If sae be ye may be
      Not fitted other where.

Although I say 't, he 's gleg enough, — sharp
And 'bout a house that 's rude and rough,
  The boy might learn to swear;
But then wi' you he 'll be sae taught,
And get sic fair example straught,
  I havena ony fear.
Ye 'll catechise him every quirk,
  And shore him weel wi' h—, — threaten
And gar him follow to the kirk—
  Aye when ye gang yoursel'.
    If ye, then, maun be, then,
      Frae hame this comin' Friday;
    Then please, sir, to lea'e, sir,
      The orders wi' your leddy.

My word of honour I hae gien,
In Paisley John's, that night at e'en,
  To meet the warld's worm;[3]
To try to get the twa to gree,
And name the airles[4] and the fee,
  In legal mode and form:

[1] Mossgavel is the proper appellation of the farm—shortened into Mossgiel.

[2] Tootie lived in Mauchline, and dealt in cows. The age of these animals is marked by rings on their horns, which may of course be cut and polished off, so as to cause the cow to appear younger than it is.

[3] A term expressive of a mean, avaricious character.

[4] The airles—earnest-money.

I ken he weel a sneck can draw,[1]
When simple bodies let him;
And if a devil be at a',
In faith he 's sure to get him.
To phrase you, and praise you,
Ye ken your Laureate scorns:
The prayer still, you share still,
Of grateful MINSTREL BURNS.

In this month, also, he addressed a poetical letter of sagacious advice to Andrew Aiken,[2] son of his patron Robert Aiken, then about to launch out into the world:—

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

May 1786.

I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
A something to have sent you,
Though it should serve nae other end
Than just a kind memento;
But how the subject-theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps turn out a sermon.

Ye 'll try the world fu' soon, my lad,
And, Andrew dear, believe me,
Ye 'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye:
For care and trouble set your thought,
Even when your end 's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where every nerve is strained.

I 'll no say men are villains a';
The real, hardened wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricked;
But, och! mankind are unco weak,
And little to be trusted;
If self the wavering balance shake,
It 's rarely right adjusted!

[1] See note to the *Address to the Deil*, p. 169.

[2] Andrew Aiken entered commercial life at Liverpool, and prospered. He died in 1831 at Riga, where he held the office of English consul. The late Mr Niven of Kilbride—the 'Willie' of the Kirkoswald anecdotes—always alleged that Burns originally addressed this epistle to him.

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
  Their fate we should na censure,
For still th' important end of life
  They equally may answer;
A man may hae an honest heart,
  Though poortith hourly stare him; poverty
A man may tak a neibor's part,
  Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

Aye free, aff han' your story tell,
  When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel'
  Ye scarcely tell to ony.
Conceal yoursel' as weel 's ye can
  Frae critical dissection,
But keek through every other man look
  Wi' sharpened, sly inspection.[1]

The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love, flame
  Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
  Though naething should divulge it:
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
  The hazard of concealing;
But, och! it hardens a' within,
  And petrifies the feeling!

To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,
  Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by every wile
  That 's justified by honour;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
  Nor for a train-attendant,
But for the glorious privilege
  Of being independent.

The fear o' hell 's a hangman's whip,
  To haud the wretch in order;
But where ye feel your honour grip,
  Let that aye be your border:
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
  Debar a' side-pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
  Uncaring consequences.

[1] It is not often that the sagacity of Burns is open to challenge; but here certainly he is not philosophically right. It must always be a questionable maxim which proposes to benefit the individual at the expense of his fellow-creatures, or which, if generally followed, would neutralise itself—as this would do. Let all men rather be open, and let all men be unsuspicious, to the utmost degree that a prudent regard to circumstances will allow.

The great Creator to revere
  Must sure become the creature;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
  And even the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,
  Be complaisance extended;
An Atheist laugh's a poor exchange
  For Deity offended!

When ranting round in Pleasure's ring,
  Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a random sting,
  It may be little minded;
But when on life we're tempest-driven,
  A conscience but a canker,
A correspondence fixed wi' Heaven,
  Is sure a noble anchor!

Adieu, dear amiable youth!
  Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
May prudence, fortitude, and truth,
  Erect your brow undaunting!
In ploughman phrase, 'God send you speed,'
  Still daily to grow wiser;
And may you better reck the rede warning
  Than ever did th' adviser!

In a copy of this poem in Burns's own hand, and bearing date 'Mossgiel, May 15th, 1786,' there occurs an additional stanza which the admirable taste of the poet had doubtless observed to be below the rest in terseness and point, and which he had therefore seen fit to omit. It throws so valuable a light on the state of his own mind at this crisis, that it certainly ought not to be suppressed, though we should not desire to see it replaced in the poem. It occurs immediately after the line, 'And petrifies the feeling.'

If ye hae made a step aside,
  Some hap mistake o'erta'en you,
Yet still keep up a decent pride,
  And ne'er o'er far demean you:
Time comes wi' kind oblivous shade,
  And daily darker sets it,
And if nae mair mistakes are made,
  The world soon forgets it.[1]

[1] The copy of the poem above alluded to is in the possession of Mr George Johnston, broker, Liverpool.

This month, however, appears to have witnessed a much more wonderful aberration from the forlorn state indicated in the *Lament*. The heart of man is full of mystery. Sometimes when it appears most keenly set upon one passion, it is at the nearest point to turning into some wholly different channel. Its reactions from wounded affection are amongst its most surprising transitions. Burns had been cast off by the Armours in what he felt as a most shameful way—divorced on account of poverty! In this moment of wounded pride he recalled the image of an amiable girl in the service of his friend Hamilton, a sweet, sprightly, blue-eyed creature, of a firmer modesty and self-respect than too many of the other maidens he had addressed. Mary Campbell was of Highland parentage, from the neighbourhood of Dunoon, on the Firth of Clyde. Her father was a sailor in a revenue-cutter, the station of which being at Campbelton, in Kintyre, his family now resided there. We may presume that the young woman was somewhat superior in cast of mind, manners, and intelligence to her situation, as it is ascertained that she had spent some of her youthful years in the family of the Rev. David Campbell of Loch Ranza, in Arran, a relation of her mother. She had afterwards been induced by another relative, a Mrs Isabella Campbell, who was housekeeper to a family in Ayrshire, to come to that county and take a situation as a servant. There is some obscurity about the situations and movements of Mary: it is quite certain that she was at one time dairy-maid at Coilsfield, and the surviving children of Mr Hamilton are probably right in thinking that she was nurse-maid to their deceased brother Alexander, who was born in July 1785, and that she saw him through some of the early stages of infancy before leaving their house. As a stranger serving only for a short time in the village, she has been little remembered there. Mrs Begg recollects no sort of reference to her at Mossgiel, except from the poet himself, when he told John Blane one day that 'Mary had refused to meet him in the old castle'—the dismantled tower of the priory near Mr Hamilton's house.

A song of Burns, in persons, scenery, and circumstances most sweetly pastoral, and breathing of luxurious love unsmirched by disappointment actual or anticipated, must here be introduced, because it undoubtedly relates to his passion for Mary. It may be remarked, that the locality, Glen Afton, which is at a considerable distance, in the head of Nithsdale, has led to some misapprehensions regarding the history of the lyric; but all doubt is set at rest by a daughter of Mrs Dunlop, who affirms that she remembers hearing

Burns say it was written upon the Coilsfield dairy-maid. We must consequently infer, that the name Afton was adopted by our poet *pro euphoniæ gratiâ*—suggested to him, probably, by the name of Afton Lodge, in the neighbourhood of Coilsfield, the residence of his friend and patroness Mrs Stewart of Stair.[1]

FLOW GENTLY, SWEET AFTON.

TUNE—*The Yellow-haired Laddie.*

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I 'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary 's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds through the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing thy screaming forbear,
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far marked with the courses of clear winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;
There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;
My Mary 's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thrown off and heart-wrung as he was by Jean, it was natural enough that he should revert to Mary Campbell. On the eve of a voyage to the West Indies in a humble capacity, it was not

[1] Dr Currie stated that this song was composed in honour of Mrs Stewart herself, whose paternal property was situated on the banks of the Afton in Nithsdale. In a paper by Mr Gilbert Burns, communicating to Mr George Thomson memoranda of the subjects of his brother's songs, *Flow gently, sweet Afton*, is thus noticed: 'The poet's Highland Mary.' Dr Currie had undoubtedly been misinformed.

desirable that he should unite himself with any woman, however dear; but his soul rushed to a compensation for the desertion of Armour—prudential considerations, as usual with him where affairs of the heart were concerned, formed little or no impediment—he betook himself to Mary, and found her willing to be his for life, notwithstanding all that had passed with Jean. Such at least is the view we take of the circumstances, from all that has transpired.

It was agreed that Mary should give up her place, and go home for a short time to her friends in the Highlands, in order to arrange matters for her union with the poet. But before going —on the second Sunday of May, the 14th of the month—Mary and Burns had a farewell meeting in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayr. The day and the place are indicated by himself. It is probable that the lovers did not confine themselves to the banks of the Ayr, but digressed into the minor valley of the Faile, where the woods of Coilsfield compose many beautiful scenes. However this may be, Mr Cromek tells that 'their adieu was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to impose awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook—they laved their hands in the limpid stream—and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other.' Mary presented to her lover a plain small Bible in one volume. Burns returned the compliment with a more elegant one in two volumes. The whole ceremony speaks of such an extreme anxiety for the constancy of his new mistress, as might be expected of one who had just suffered from the perjury of another. The volumes given to Mary have chanced to be preserved. On a blank-leaf in one of them is inscribed, in Burns's handwriting, 'And ye shall not swear by my name falsely—I am the Lord.'—*Levit.* xix. 12. On the second volume: 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths.'—*Matth.* v. 33. And on a blank-leaf his name had been inscribed, together with his *mason-mark*. The lovers parted never to meet again.

The date of Burns's attachment to Highland Mary, and several of the circumstances connected with it, have been matter of doubt and obscurity till lately. In January 1850, Mr William Douglas brought before the Society of Scottish Antiquaries an elaborate paper, making it all but perfectly certain that the affair was, what had never been hitherto suspected, an episode in the attachment to Jean Armour. He shewed that it could not have been, as several

biographers had surmised, a strictly early or juvenile attachment, as the Bible is dated in 1782, and the name of the poet is followed by the word 'Mossgiel'—a place with which he had no connection till Martinmas 1783, when he was nearly twenty-five years of age, and where he did not reside till March of the ensuing year. Mr Douglas also traced the connection between this attachment and the design of going to the West Indies, a design of which we hear at no earlier period of his life than spring 1786. This connection appears strongly in a song which Burns afterwards published in Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*:—

THE HIGHLAND LASSIE.

Nae gentle dames, though e'er sae fair,[1]
Shall ever be my Muse's care:
Their titles a' are empty show;
Gie me my Highland lassie, O.

Within the glen sae bushy, O,
Aboon the plains sae rushy, O,
I set me down wi' right good-will,
To sing my Highland lassie, O.

Oh were yon hills and valleys mine,
Yon palace and yon gardens fine!
The world then the love should know
I bear my Highland lassie, O.

But fickle Fortune frowns on me,
And I maun cross the raging sea;
But while my crimson currents flow,
I 'll love my Highland lassie, O.

Although through foreign climes I range,
I know her heart will never change,
For her bosom burns with honour's glow,
My faithful Highland lassie, O.

For her I 'll dare the billows' roar,
For her I 'll trace a distant shore,
That Indian wealth may lustre throw
Around my Highland lassie, O.

She has my heart, she has my hand,
By sacred truth and honour's band!
'Till the mortal stroke shall lay me low,
I 'm thine, my Highland lassie, O.

[1] 'Gentle is here used in opposition to simple, in the Scottish and old English sense of the word. Nae gentle dames—no high-blooded.'—CURRIE.

Farewell the glen sae bushy, O!
Farewell the plain sae rushy, O!
To other lands I now must go,
To sing my Highland lassie, O.

Burns himself, in the notes on Johnson's Museum, which he wrote for Captain Riddel of Glenriddel,[1] says, regarding this song, it 'was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was at all known in the world. My Highland Lassie was a warm-hearted, charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love.' And then he goes on to relate the above story of their parting. Now, the whole circumstances detailed in this little ballad—his love, his desire of fortune for the sake of the loved one, and especially his being compelled by the frowns of fortune to cross the raging sea—entirely answer to the crisis at which Burns had now arrived, and they do not at all answer to any other period of his life of which we have any knowledge.

There is another song, which was found amongst the poet's manuscripts after his death, and which answers perfectly to the circumstances and feelings which have been represented: it is entitled by himself

A PRAYER FOR MARY.

Powers celestial! whose protection
Ever guards the virtuous fair,
While in distant climes I wander,
Let my Mary be your care:
Let her form sae fair and faultless,
Fair and faultless as your own,
Let my Mary's kindred spirit
Draw your choicest influence down.

Make the gales you waft around her
Soft and peaceful as her breast;
Breathing in the breeze that fans her,
Soothe her bosom into rest:
Guardian angels! oh protect her
When in distant lands I roam;
To realms unknown while fate exiles me,
Make her bosom still my home.

Burns also told Mr Thomson in 1792: 'In my very e

[1] Cromek's *Reliques*, p. 237.

when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl:'—

[WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES, MY MARY?]

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
  And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
  Across the Atlantic's roar?[1]

Oh sweet grow the lime and the orange,
  And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
  Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
  I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me
  When I forget my vow!

Oh plight me your faith, my Mary,
  And plight me your lily-white hand;
Oh plight me your faith, my Mary,
  Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
  In mutual affection to join;
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
  The hour and the moment o' time!

But for the phrases, 'very early life,' and 'my very early years,' there could be no difficulty in assigning *My Highland Lassie* and *Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?* which is evidently another expression of the same passion, to the date 1786; but Mr Douglas argued, that either Burns felt as if the lapse of six years had brought him out of youth into middle life, or he wished to maintain a mystery regarding the story of Mary. For his studying to keep the matter in some obscurity, there certainly might be motives of some cogency; for one, a dislike to recall before the mind of his wife an affair which had come somewhat awkwardly between them, and run nigh to sever them for ever. But then, it may be said, Burns was a man above disguises and secrets. So he was in general; yet did he not say in a poem which left his hand this very month—

—— 'Aye keep something to yourself'
  Ye scarcely tell to ony?'

[1] The first verse is not to be read as expressing a desire of the poet that Mary should accompany him to the West Indies; the rest of the poem makes the idea of a parting and farewell quite clear. The verse is to be accepted simply as a variation of the song whose air was adopted—*Will ye go to the Ewe-buchts, Marion?*

The ingenuity and industry of Mr Douglas had so nearly succeeded in solving this curious problem in Burns's history, that it is almost a pity to add to the evidence he has brought forward. So it is, however, that, as will be seen hereafter, proofs of a more satisfactory kind for the same conclusion have been discovered.

It is to be feared that Burns was not a man for whom his admirers can safely claim steadiness of affection, any more than they can arrogate for him a romantic or platonic delicacy. His was a heart whose pulses were synchronous with those of no other human being; he loved keenly, enthusiastically, for the time, but not necessarily for a long time; and then there were 'under-plots in the drama of his love.'[1] It appears as if there was still another maiden high in his book of passion during this agitating period. Of her he takes leave in terms nearly resembling those employed in the *Highland Lassie*, and which involve the same allusions regarding his own approaching exile from his native land:—

ELIZA.

TUNE—*Gilderoy.*

From thee, Eliza, I must go,
  And from my native shore:
The cruel fates between us throw
  A boundless ocean's roar;
But boundless oceans, roaring wide
  Between my love and me,
They never, never can divide
  My heart and soul from thee.

Farewell, farewell, Eliza dear,
  The maid that I adore!
A boding voice is in my ear,
  We part to meet no more!
But the last throb that leaves my heart,
  While death stands victor by,
That throb, Eliza, is thy part,
  And thine that latest sigh!

This song appeared in the first edition of his poems, and the reality of the person and of the name assigned to her is attested by his telling in a letter, written on his return to Mauchline in June 1787,

[1] It is well at this time to recall what his brother Gilbert says regarding the plurality of his attachments:—'One generally reigned paramount in his affections; but as Yorick's affections flowed out toward Madame de L—— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was *frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many under-plots in the drama of his love.*'

that he had called for his 'quondam Eliza.' From a variety of circumstances, the editor has been led to conclude that Eliza was identical with the *Miss Betty*, one of the Mauchline Belles. She was an amiable girl—had felt kindly towards Burns through all his late distresses—and had thus raised a kind of love, chiefly composed of gratitude, in his bosom.

There is sufficiently clear evidence, apart from all consideration of Eliza, that the gust of passion towards Mary did not long maintain the bright integrity which was promised for it on the banks of the Faile. It is tolerably evident, from the songs, that the idea of taking Mary along with him had soon been given up, if it ever was seriously entertained. Within a very few weeks after his parting with her, we find him speaking of Jean as one who still had a sway over his affections. He tells how vainly he had been endeavouring, by dissipation and other mischiefs, to drive her out of his head, notwithstanding that he now regarded her as even more unfaithful towards himself than ever. But before giving the letter in which this sentiment is expressed, a brief recital of circumstances is necessary. At the end of March, in order to avoid the pressure of her father's displeasure, Jean went to Paisley, to stay for some time with an uncle, Andrew Purdie, a carpenter; and here she found a friendly shelter. There was no other person in Paisley whom she knew, excepting a good-looking young weaver, named Robert Wilson, who was a native of Mauchline, and who had often danced with her at the balls there. Finding herself in want of money, she thought of applying for some to Wilson, whose profession was in those days so prosperous as to bring him in a considerable income. The young man called for her, spoke kindly, and advanced the little sum she required. He repeated the visit several times, and thus gave rise to a report which reached Mauchline, that Jean and he were likely to form a match. In reality, the young man acted at first under mere kindness: the utmost length he ever went afterwards was to tell Jean that, if she did not marry Burns, he would never take a wife while she remained disengaged. The story, however, reached the ears of Burns in its most exaggerated form, and while it made him completely miserable, it enabled him to know that Jean was still dear to him.

TO MR DAVID BRICE.[1]

MOSSGIEL, *June* 12, 1786.

DEAR BRICE—I received your message by G. Paterson, and as I am not very throng [busy] at present, I just write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate, as your humble servant, still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you that will give me any pleasure to mention, or you to hear.

Poor ill-advised ungrateful Armour came home on Friday last.[2] You have heard all the particulars of that affair, and a black affair it is. What she thinks of her conduct now I don't know: one thing I do know—she has made me completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her; and to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all, though I won't tell her so if I were to see her, which I don't want to do. My poor dear unfortunate Jean! how happy have I been in thy arms! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely. I foresee she is in the road to, I am afraid, eternal ruin.

May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her; and may His grace be with her and bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure: the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then, farewell dear old Scotland! and farewell dear ungrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more.

You will have heard that I am going to commence poet in print; and to-morrow my works go to the press. I expect it will be a volume of about 200 pages—it is just the last foolish action I intend to do; and then turn a wise man as fast as possible. Believe me to be, dear Brice, your friend and well-wisher,

R. B.

It serves to add to the strange confusion of the love-affairs of Burns, that there is a canzonet in which the same ideas which we have already seen brought forward regarding an eternal constancy to Mary and Eliza are wrought up in favour of Jean.

[1] A shoemaker in Glasgow. [2] Friday, 9th June.

THOUGH CRUEL FATE.

TUNE—*The Northern Lass.*

Though cruel fate should bid us part,
  Far as the pole and line;
Her dear idea round my heart
  Should tenderly entwine.

Though mountains rise and deserts howl,
  And oceans roar between,
Yet dearer than my deathless soul,
  I still would love my Jean.

There is no evidence that this slight lyric was composed at the crisis in question; but the idea of a parting 'far as the pole and line' is suspicious. The piece, as will be seen afterwards, appears early in the second volume of Johnson's Museum, which was in the engraver's hands during the latter half of 1787, and, strangely enough, it stands, with an acknowledgment of the authorship, *vis-à-vis* to the anonymous *Highland Lassie.*

In the midst of the cross-fire of various affections, and the dreary prospects of exile, the comic muse of Burns was not inactive. He composed, on the 4th of June, a poem on the reigning scandals of his village—cases on which the session record throws ample light, if light were of any use in the matter; but unfortunately, though the mock-serious is most amusingly exemplified in this poem, its license of phrase renders it utterly unfit for publication. A few days earlier, he dates a satirical poem on a subject much out of his usual walk. 'On Tuesday [May 23] there was a meeting of the Highland Society at London for the encouragement of the fisheries in the Highlands, &c. Three thousand pounds were immediately subscribed by eleven gentlemen present for this particular purpose. The Earl of Breadalbane informed the meeting that five hundred persons had agreed to emigrate from the estates of Mr M'Donald of Glengarry; that they had subscribed money, purchased ships, &c., to carry their design into effect. The noblemen and gentlemen agreed to co-operate with government to frustrate their design; and to recommend to the principal noblemen and gentlemen in the Highlands to endeavour to prevent emigration, by improving the fisheries, agriculture, and manufactures, and particularly to enter into a subscription for that purpose.' Such is a very simple-looking announcement in the *Edinburgh Advertiser* of 30th May. One would have thought

there was little in it to excite a jealous feeling regarding the Highland proprietors, whom we have since seen vilipended not a little for the very opposite procedure. So it is, however, that Burns took up the matter otherwise, and penned, though he did not publish, an

ADDRESS OF BEELZEBUB

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Breadalbane, President of the Right Honourable and Honourable the Highland Society, which met on the 23d of May last at the Shakspeare, Covent Garden, to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of five hundred Highlanders, who, as the society were informed by Mr Mackenzie of Applecross,[1] were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters, whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr M'Donald of Glengarry to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing—LIBERTY.

Long life, my lord, and health be yours,
Unscaithed by hungered Highland boors; Unhurt
Lord, grant nae duddie desperate beggar, ragged
Wi' dirk, claymore, or rusty trigger,
May twin auld Scotland o' a life deprive
She likes—as lambkins like a knife.
Faith, you and Applecross were right
To keep the Highland hounds in sight;
I doubt na! they wad bid nae better propose
Than, let them ance out owre the water,
Then up amang thae lakes and seas,
They 'll mak what rules and laws they please;
Some daring Hancock, or a Franklin,
May set their Highland bluid a-ranklin';
Some Washington again may head them,
Or some Montgomery, fearless, lead them,
Till God knows what may be effected,
When by such heads and hearts directed;
Poor dunghill sons of dirt and mire
May to patrician rights aspire!
Nae sage North now, nor sager Sackville,
To watch and premier o'er the pack vile,
And whare will ye get Howes and Clintons
To bring them to a right repentance,
To cowe the rebel generation,
And save the honour o' the nation?

[1] Mr Mackenzie of Applecross, a considerable proprietor in the west of Ross-shire, figures on many occasions as a liberal man. Mr Knox, in his *Tour of the Highlands*, penned about this very time, mentions an act of Mr Mackenzie's precisely contrary in its character to the motive which the rash poet attributes to him. 'Perceiving,' says Knox, 'the bad policy of servitude in the Highlands, Mr Mackenzie has totally relinquished all the feudal claims upon the labour of his tenants, whom he pays with the strictest regard to justice at the rate of sevenpence or eightpence for every day employed upon his works.'

They, and be d——! what right hae they
To meat or sleep, or light o' day?
Far less to riches, power, or freedom,
But what your lordship likes to gie them?

But hear, my lord! Glengarry, hear!
Your hand 's owre light on them, I fear;
Your factors, grieves, trustees, and bailies,
I canna say but they do gaylies; pretty well
They lay aside a' tender mercies,
And tirl the hallions to the birses; strip—clowns—bristles
Yet while they 're only poind't and herriet, despoiled
They 'll keep their stubborn Highland spirit;
But smash them, crash them a' to spails! chips
And rot the dyvors i' the jails! bankrupts
The young dogs, swinge them to the labour;
Let wark and hunger mak them sober!
The hizzies, if they 're oughtlins fawsont, girls—handsome
Let them in Drury Lane be lessoned!
And if the wives and dirty brats
E'en thigger at your doors and yetts, beg—gates
Flaffan wi' duds and gray wi' beas', Flattering—vermin
Frightin' awa' your deucks and geese,
Get out a horsewhip or a jowler,
The langest thong, the fiercest growler,
And gar the tattered gipsies pack,
Wi' a' their bastards on their back!
Go on, my lord! I lang to meet you,
And in my *house at hame* to greet you;
Wi' common lords ye shanna mingle,
The benmost neuk beside the ingle, innermost
At my right han' assigned your seat
'Tween Herod's hip and Polycrate—
Or, if you on your station tarrow,
Between Almagro and Pizarro,
A seat, I'm sure, ye 're weel deservin't;
And till ye come—Your humble servant,

BEELZEBUB.[1]

June 1st, Anno Mundi 5790 [A. D. 1786.]

The subscription for the works of the Mossgiel ploughman had now, we see, been so far successful, that the printing of them was determined on. This business was undertaken by John Wilson, a bookseller at Kilmarnock, who afterwards became a thriving

[1] This poem came through the hands of Rankine of Adamhill to those of a gentleman of Ayr, who gave it to the world in the *Edinburgh Magazine* for February 1818. A copy in the poet's handwriting is, or was lately, in the possession of a person in humble life at Jedburgh.

trader, and the founder of the first Ayrshire newspaper (the *Ayr Advertiser*), by which he realised a competency. In negotiating with Wilson, the intervention of Burns's Kilmarnock friends had of course been serviceable. With them the poet had for some weeks much intercourse, while engaged in seeing his works through the press. He was still, during this time, active in the preparation of pieces which might properly see the light; and it is remarkable how many of these were of a lively cast. One was of a political character, and treated the highest personages of the realm in a style of good-natured raillery such as scarcely any poet but Burns could have exemplified.

A DREAM.

'Thoughts, words, and deeds the statute blames with reason;
But surely dreams were ne'er indicted treason.'

On reading in the public papers the *Laureate's Ode*,[1] with the other parade of June 4, 1786, the author was no sooner dropt asleep, than he imagined himself transported to the birthday levee; and in his dreaming fancy made the following 'Address:'—

Guid-mornin' to your Majesty!
  May Heaven augment your blisses,
On every new birthday, ye see,
  A humble poet wishes!
My bardship here, at your levee,
  On sic a day as this is,
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,
  Amang thae birthday dresses
    Sae fine this day.

I see ye're complimented thrang,
  By many a lord and lady;
'God save the king!' 's a cuckoo sang
  That's unco easy said aye;
The poets, too, a venal gang,
  Wi' rhymes weel-turned and ready,
Wad gar ye trow ye ne'er do wrang, make
  But aye unerring steady,
    On sic a day.

[1] Thomas Warton was then in this servile and ridiculous office. His ode for June 4, 1786, begins as follows:—

'When Freedom nursed her native fire
In ancient Greece, and ruled the lyre,
Her bards disdainful, from the tyrant's brow
  The tinsel gifts of flattery tore,
But paid to guiltless power their willing vow,
  And to the throne of virtuous kings,' &c.

On these verses the rhymes of the Ayrshire bard must be allowed to form an odd enough commentary.

For me! before a monarch's face
  Even there I winna flatter;
For neither pension, post, nor place,
  Am I your humble debtor:
So, nae reflection on your grace,
  Your kingship to bespatter;
There 's mony waur been o' the race,
  And aiblins ane been better
    Than you this day.

'Tis very true, my sovereign king,
  My skill may weel be doubted:
But facts are chiels that winna ding, — be beaten
  And downa be disputed: — cannot
Your royal nest, beneath your wing,
  Is e'en right reft and clouted,[1] — broken and patched
And now the third part of the string,
  And less, will gang about it
    Than did ae day.

Far be 't frae me that I aspire
  To blame your legislation,
Or say ye wisdom want, or fire,
  To rule this mighty nation!
But faith! I muckle doubt, my sire,
  Ye 've trusted ministration
To chaps, wha, in a barn or byre,
  Wad better filled their station
    Than courts yon day.

And now ye 've gien auld Britain peace;
  Her broken shins to plaister;
Your sair taxation does her fleece,
  Till she has scarce a tester;
For me, thank God, my life 's a lease,
  Nae bargain wearing faster,
Or, faith! I fear, that, wi' the geese,
  I shortly boost to pasture — behoved
    I' the craft some day. — field

I 'm no mistrusting Willie Pitt,
  When taxes he enlarges
(And Will 's a true guid fallow's get,[2]
  A name not envy spairges), — asperses

[1] The American colonies being lost.

[2] Gait, gett, or gyte, a homely substitute for the word child in Scotland. Sir Walter Scott speaks somewhere of the *gaits' class* in the Edinburgh High School—namely, the class containing the youngest pupils. The above stanza is not the only testimony of admiration which Burns pays to the great Earl of Chatham.

That he intends to pay your debt,
  And lessen a' your charges;
But, G—sake! let nae saving fit
  Abridge your bonny barges[1]
    And boats this day.

Adieu, my liege! may Freedom geck — sport
  Beneath your high protection;
And may you rax Corruption's neck, — stretch
  And gie her for dissection.
But since I 'm here, I 'll no neglect,
  In loyal, true affection,
To pay your Queen, with due respect,
  My fealty and subjection
    This great birthday.

Hail Majesty Most Excellent!
  While nobles strive to please ye,
Will ye accept a compliment
  A simple poet gies ye?
Thae bonny bairn-time, Heaven has lent, — children
  Still higher may they heeze ye — raise
In bliss, till fate some day is sent,
  For ever to release ye
    Frae care that day.

For you, young potentate o' Wales,
  I tell your Highness fairly,
Down Pleasure's stream, wi' swelling sails,
  I 'm tauld ye 're driving rarely;
But some day ye may gnaw your nails,
  And curse your folly sairly,
That e'er ye brak Diana's pales,
  Or rattled dice wi' Charlie,[2]
    By night or day.

Yet aft a ragged cowte 's been known — colt
  To mak a noble aiver; — cart-horse
So, ye may doucely fill a throne,
  For a' their clish-ma-claver: — talk

[1] On the supplies for the navy being voted, spring 1786, Captain Macbride counselled some changes in that force, particularly the giving up of 64-gun ships, which occasioned a good deal of discussion.

[2] Charles James Fox.

There, him at Agincourt wha shone,
  Few better were or braver;
And yet, wi' funny, queer Sir John,
  He was an unco shaver,
    For monie a day.[1]

For you, right reverend Osnaburg,[2]
  Nane sets the lawn-sleeve sweeter,
Although a ribbon at your lug
  Wad been a dress completer:
As ye disown yon paughty dog — proud
  That bears the keys of Peter,
Then, swith! and get a wife to hug,
  Or, trouth! ye'll stain the mitre
    Some luckless day.

Young, royal Tarry Breeks,[3] I learn,
  Ye've lately come athwart her,
A glorious galley,[4] stem and stern,
  Weel rigged for Venus' barter;
But first hang out, that she'll discern,
  Your hymeneal charter,
Then heave aboard your grapple-airn,
  And, large upon her quarter,
    Come full that day.

Ye, lastly, bonny blossoms a',
  Ye royal lasses dainty,
Heaven mak ye guid as weel as braw,
  And gie you lads a-plenty:
But sneer na British boys awa',
  For kings are unco scant aye;
And German gentles are but sma',
  They're better just than want aye
    On ony day.

God bless you a'! consider now,
  Ye're unco muckle dautet; — caressed
But ere the course o' life be through,
  It may be bitter sautet:

[1] It appears from Tyler's *Memoirs of Henry V.* (2 vols. 1838), that that monarch was not so remarkable for a frolicsome youth as Shakspeare, guided by the chroniclers, has led us to believe. The basis of the parallel drawn by the poet being thus destroyed, we may be the less surprised that the prophecy he grounds upon it did not prove very sound.

[2] Frederick, the second son of George III., at first Bishop of Osnaburg, afterwards Duke of York.

[3] William Henry, third son of George III., afterwards Duke of Clarence and King William IV.

[4] Alluding to the newspaper account of a certain royal sailor's amour.—*B.*

And I hae seen their coggie fou, bowl full
That yet hae tarrow't at it;[1]
But or the day was done, I trow,
The laggen[2] they hae clautet scraped
Fu' clean that day.

It is perhaps also to this period that we are to assign a more noted poem—the *Holy Fair*.

The transactions described in this piece are those which attended a rural celebration of the communion in Scotland till a very recent period, if not till the present day. But it is important to notice that the rite itself, and even the place where it was administered, form no part of the picture. Burns limits himself to the assemblage, partly composed of parishioners and partly of strangers, which takes place on such occasions, in some open space near the church, where a succession of clergymen, usually from the neighbouring parishes, give from a *tent* or movable pulpit a succession of services, while a lesser body are attending the more solemn ritual within doors. The particular scene referred to by the poet is the church-yard of Mauchline,[3] where the crowd sat upon tombstones, forms, and stools, or stretched themselves on the ground, and thus must have formed a picture of a very remarkable kind. That Burns's description is not exaggerated in any particular, is rendered certain by a passage which we shall take leave to adduce from a pamphlet published in the year of the poet's birth, under the title of *A Letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland.* 'In Scotland,' says this writer, 'they run from kirk to kirk, and flock to see a sacrament, and make the same use of it that the papists do of their pilgrimages and processions; that is, indulge themselves in drunkenness, folly, and idleness. Most of the servants, when they agree to serve their masters in the western parts of the kingdom, make a special provision that they shall have liberty to go to a certain number of fairs, or to an equal number

[1] To *tarrow* at food is to linger over it from dislike or want of appetite.

[2] The angle between the side and bottom of a wooden dish.

[3] The communion was administered at Mauchline on the second Sunday of August, and it seems to have been very attractive, for while the whole population of the parish was not probably above 1500, the number of communicants stated in the session-books for the occasion of 1784 was 1350—that for 1785 was 1242—and that for 1786 'about fourteen hundred.' The tables along the church held a hundred and five persons, and to accommodate the whole multitude of applicants, the minister officiating on each occasion was allowed only fifteen minutes.

of sacraments; and as they consider a sacrament, or an occasion (as they call the administration of the Lord's Supper), in a neighbouring parish in the same light in which they do at a fair, so they behave at it much in the same manner. I defy Italy, in spite of all its superstition, to produce a scene better fitted to raise pity and regret in a religious, humane, and understanding heart, or to afford an ampler field for ridicule to the careless and profane, than what they call a field-preaching upon one of those occasions. At the time of the administration of the Lord's Supper upon the Thursday, Saturday, and Monday, we have preaching in the fields near the church. At first, you find a great number of men and women lying together upon the grass; here they are sleeping and snoring, some with their faces towards heaven, others with their faces turned downwards, or covered with their bonnets; there you find a knot of young fellows and girls making assignations to go home together in the evening, or to meet in some ale-house; in another place you see a pious circle sitting round an ale-barrel, many of which stand ready upon carts for the refreshment of the saints. The heat of the summer season, the fatigue of travelling, and the greatness of the crowd, naturally dispose them to drink; which inclines some of them to sleep, works up the enthusiasm of others, and contributes not a little to produce those miraculous conversions that sometimes happen at these occasions; in a word, in this sacred assembly there is an odd mixture of religion, sleep, drinking, courtship, and a confusion of sexes, ages, and characters. When you get a little nearer the speaker, so as to be within the reach of the sound, though not of the sense of the words, for that can only reach a small circle, you will find some weeping and others laughing, some pressing to get nearer the tent or tub in which the parson is sweating, bawling, jumping, and beating the desk; others fainting with the stifling heat, or wrestling to extricate themselves from the crowd: one seems very devout and serious, and the next moment is scolding and cursing his neighbour for squeezing or treading on him; in an instant after, his countenance is composed to the religious gloom, and he is groaning, sighing, and weeping for his sins: in a word, there is such an absurd mixture of the serious and comic, that were we convened for any other purpose than that of worshipping the God and Governor of Nature, the scene would exceed all *power of face.*'

One would almost suppose that the poet had only versified this description, so nearly does his poem coincide with it. It may be added, that the *Leith Races* of Fergusson served him as a literary

model. The Edinburgh poet is there conducted to the festive scene by an imaginary being, whom he names MIRTH, exactly as Burns is conducted to the Holy Fair by FUN; but the poetical painting of the Ayrshire bard far distances that of his predecessor.

THE HOLY FAIR.

'A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty observation;
And secret hung, with poisoned crust,
The dirk of Defamation:
A mask that like the gorget shewed,
Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
He wrapt him in Religion.'

Hypocrisy à-la-Mode.

Upon a simmer Sunday-morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walkèd forth to view the corn,
And snuff the cauler air. fresh
The rising sun o'er Galston muirs,
Wi' glorious light was glintin';
The hares were hirplin' down the furs, limping
The lav'rocks they were chantin'
Fu' sweet that day.

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad,
To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies, early at the road, wenches
Cam skelpin' up the way;
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black,
But ane wi' lyart lining; gray
The third, that gaed a-wee a-back,
Was in the fashion shining,
Fu' gay that day.

The twa appeared like sisters twin,
In feature, form, and claes;
Their visage withered, lang, and thin,
And sour as ony slaes:
The third cam up, hap-step-an'-lowp,
As light as ony lambie,
And wi' a curchie low did stoop,
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I: 'Sweet lass,
  I think ye seem to ken me;
I 'm sure I 've seen that bonny face,
  But yet I canna name ye.'
Quo' she, and laughin' as she spak,
  And taks me by the hands:
'Ye, for my sake, hae gien the feck — most
  Of a' the ten commands
    A screed some day.

'My name is Fun—your cronie dear,
  The nearest friend ye hae;
And this is Superstition here,
  And that 's Hypocrisy.
I 'm gaun to Mauchline Holy Fair,
  To spend an hour in daffin': — sport
Gin ye 'll go there, yon runkled pair,
  We will get famous laughin'
    At them this day.'

Quoth I: 'With a' my heart, I 'll do 't;
  I 'll get my Sunday's sark on,
And meet you on the holy spot—
  Faith, we 'se hae fine remarkin'!'
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time, — breakfast
  And soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad, from side to side,
  Wi' mony a weary body,
    In droves that day.

Here farmers gash, in ridin' graith, — sensible—attire
  Gaed hoddin by their cotters; — jogging
There, swankies young, in braw braid claith, — striplings
  Are springin' o'er the gutters.
The lasses, skelpin' barefit, thrang,
  In silks and scarlets glitter;
Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in monie a whang, — cut
  And farls baked wi' butter, — cakes
    Fu' crump that day.

When by the plate we set our nose,
  Weel heapèd up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glowr Black-bonnet throws,
  And we maun draw our tippence.[1]

[1] Black-bonnet, a cant name for the elder stationed beside the plate at the door for receiving the offerings of the congregation.

Then in we go to see the show;
  On every side they 're gath'rin',
Some carrying dails, some chairs, and stools,
  And some are busy blethrin' chatting
    Right loud that day.

Here stands a shed to fend the showers,
  And screen our country gentry,
There, Racer Jess,[1] and twa-three w——s,
  Are blinkin' at the entry.
Here sits a raw of tittlin' jauds,
  Wi' heaving breast and bare neck,
And there a batch o' wabster lads,
  Blackguarding frae Kilmarnock
    For fun this day,

Here, some are thinkin' on their sins,
  And some upo' their claes;
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
  Anither sighs and prays:
On this hand sits a chosen swatch, sample
  Wi' screwed-up, grace-proud faces;
On that a set o' chaps at watch,
  Thrang winkin' on the lasses
    To chairs that day.

Oh happy is that man and blest!
  Nae wonder that it pride him!
Wha's ain dear lass, that he likes best,
  Comes clinkin' down beside him!
Wi' arm reposed on the chair back,
  He sweetly does compose him;
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
  An 's loof upon her bosom,
    Unkenn'd that day.

Now a' the congregation o'er
  Is silent expectation:
For Moodie speels the holy door,
  Wi' tidings o' d——tion.[2]

[1] A poor half-witted girl of the name of Gibson (daughter of Poosie Nansie), who was remarkable for pedestrian powers, and sometimes went with messages for hire.

[2] In the Kilmarnock edition, the word was salvation: it was changed at the suggestion of Dr Blair of Edinburgh. Moodie was the minister of Riccarton, and one of the heroes of *The Twa Herds*. He was a never-failing assistant at the Mauchline sacraments. His personal appearance and style of oratory were exactly such as described by the poet. He dwelt chiefly on the terrors of the law. On one occasion, he told the audience that they would find the text in John viii. 44, but it was so applicable to their case, that there was no need of his reading it to them. The verse begins: 'Ye are of your father the devil,' &c.

Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
  'Mang sons o' God present him,
The very sight o' Moodie's face
  To 's ain het hame had sent him
    Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' Faith
  Wi' rattlin' and wi' thumpin'!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
  He 's stampin' and he 's jumpin'!
His lengthened chin, his turned-up snout,
  His eldritch squeel and gestures, unearthly
Oh how they fire the heart devout,
  Like cantharidian plasters,
    On sic a day!

But hark! the tent has changed its voice;
  There 's peace and rest nae langer:
For a' the real judges rise,
  They canna sit for anger.
Smith opens out his cauld harangues,[1]
  On practice and on morals;
And aff the godly pour in thrangs,
  To gie the jars and barrels
    A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine,
  Of moral powers and reason?
His English style and gesture fine
  Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
  Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
  But ne'er a word o' faith in
    That 's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
  Against sic poisoned nostrum;
For Peebles, frae the Water-fit,[2]
  Ascends the holy rostrum:

[1] Mr (afterwards Dr) George Smith, minister of Galston—the same whom the poet introduces in a different feeling, under the appellation of Irvine-side in *The Kirk's Alarm*. Burns meant on this occasion to compliment him on his rational mode of preaching, but the friends of the divine regarded the stanza as calculated to injure his popularity. A brother clergyman recollects the following anecdote of Mr Smith:—When he was a bachelor, and officiating in a neighbouring church, a beautiful young lady, very handsomely attired, entered, after he had begun his sermon. He was so much struck by her appearance as to pause for a few seconds, and forget the thread of his discourse. He thus apologised to the congregation: 'My friends, we are all liable to mistakes and errors; let us recollect ourselves a little'—and then went on.

[2] The Rev. Mr (afterwards Dr) William Peebles, minister of Newton-upon-Ayr, often called,

See, up he 's got the Word o' God,
  And meek and mim has viewed it, primly
While Common Sense has ta'en the road,
  And aff and up the Cowgate,[1]
    Fast, fast that day.

Wee Miller[2] niest the guard relieves,
  And orthodoxy raibles, rattles
Though in his heart he weel believes,
  And thinks it auld wives' fables:
But, faith! the birkie wants a manse,
  So, cannily he hums them;
Although his carnal wit and sense
  Like hafflins-ways o'ercomes him
    At times that day.

Now but and ben the change-house fills,
  Wi' yill-caup commentators;
Here 's crying out for bakes and gills, biscuits
  And there the pint-stoup clatters;
While thick and thrang, and loud and lang,
  Wi' logic and wi' scripture,
They raise a din, that, in the end,
  Is like to breed a rupture
    O' wrath that day.

from its geographical situation, the *Water-fit*. He was in great favour at Ayr among the orthodox party, though much inferior in ability to the moderate ministers of that ancient burgh. Robert Hamilton, a crack-pated pauper, who lived long in Ayr, and amused everybody by his droll sayings, one day thus addressed a citizen in the hearing of one of these heretical gentlemen: 'I dreamt yestreen I was dead, and at the door o' heaven; and whan I knocked at the door, Peter said: "Wha 's there?" "It 's me, Mr Robert Hamilton." "Whare d 'ye come frae?" "Frae the toon o' Ayr." "Get awa' wi' ye! Ye canna get in here. There has nane been admitted frae that toon this twa hunner year." Whan I gang back, I 'll say I 'm come frae Prestwick or the Newton.' Meaning, in the latter case, that he would have the benefit of the reputation of Mr Peebles's ministrations.

[1] The Cowgate is a street running off the main one of Mauchline, exactly opposite the entrance to the church-yard. The sense of the passage might be supposed allegorical, and this is the theory which the present editor is inclined to adopt. He must, however, state that a more literal sense is attached to it by the best-informed persons in Mauchline. It is said that Mr Mackenzie, the surgeon of the village, and a friend of Burns, had recently written on some controversial topic under the title of *Common Sense*. On the particular day which Burns is supposed to have had in view, Mackenzie was engaged to join Sir John Whitefoord of Ballochmyle, and go to Dumfries House, in Auchinleck parish, in order to dine with the Earl of Dumfries. The doctor, therefore, after attending church, and listening to some of the outdoor harangues, was seen to leave the assembly, and go off along the Cowgate, on his way to Ballochmyle, exactly as Peebles ascended the rostrum.

[2] The Rev. Mr Miller, afterwards minister of Kilmaurs. He was of remarkably low stature, but enormous girth. Burns believed him at the time to lean at heart to the moderate party. This stanza, virtually the most depreciatory in the whole poem, is said to have retarded Miller's advancement.

Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair
  Than either school or college:
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
  It pangs us fou o' knowledge. crams
Be 't whisky gill, or penny wheep,
  Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
  To kittle up our notion
    By night or day.

The lads and lasses, blithely bent
  To mind baith saul and body,
Sit round the table weel content,
  And steer about the toddy.
On this ane's dress, and that ane's leuk,
  They 're making observations;
While some are cozie i' the neuk,
  And formin' assignations
    To meet some day.

But now the L—'s ain trumpet touts,
  Till a' the hills are rairin', roaring
And echoes back return the shouts—
  Black Russell[1] is na sparin':
His piercing words, like Highland swords,
  Divide the joints and marrow;
His talk o' hell, whare devils dwell,
  Our vera sauls does harrow[2]
    Wi' fright that day.

A vast, unbottomed, boundless pit,
  Filled fou o' lowin' brunstane,
Wha's ragin' flame, and scorchin' heat,
  Wad melt the hardest whunstane!
The half-asleep start up wi' fear,
  And think they hear it roarin',
When presently it does appear
  'Twas but some neebor snorin'
    Asleep that day.

'Twad be owre lang a tale to tell
  How monie stories past,
And how they crowded to the yill,
  When they were a' dismist:

[1] The Rev. John Russell, at this time minister of the Chapel-of-Ease, Kilmarnock, afterwards minister of Stirling, one of the heroes of *The Twa Herds*. A correspondent says: 'He was the most tremendous man I ever saw: Black Hugh Macpherson was a beauty in comparison. His voice was like thunder, and his sentiments were such as must have shocked any class of hearers in the least more refined than those whom he usually addressed.'

[2] Shakspeare's *Hamlet*.—*B.*

How drink gaed round, in cogs and caups,
  Amang the forms and benches:
And cheese and bread, frae women's laps,
  Was dealt about in lunches,
    And dauds that day.

In comes a gaucy, gash guidwife, fat
  And sits down by the fire,
Syne draws her kebbuck and her knife; cheese
  The lasses they are shyer.
The auld guidmen, about the grace,
  Frae side to side they bother,
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
  And gies them 't like a tether,
    Fu' lang that day.

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass,
  Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
  Or melvie his braw claithing! soil with meal
Oh wives, be mindfu' ance yoursel'
  How bonny lads ye wanted,
And dinna, for a kebbuck-heel,
  Let lasses be affronted
    On sic a day!

Now Clinkumbell,[1] wi' rattlin' tow,
  Begins to jow and croon;
Some swagger hame, the best they dow, can
  Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps the billies halt a blink,
  Till lasses strip their shoon:
Wi' faith and hope, and love and drink,
  They 're a' in famous tune
    For crack that day.

How monie hearts this day converts
  O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane,
  As saft as ony flesh is.
There 's some are fou o' love divine;
  There 's some are fou o' brandy;
And monie jobs that day begin
  May end in houghmagandy
    Some ither day.

[1] Variation—'Now Robin Gib,' &c.

In Burns's time, this poem was much relished by the moderate clergy, Dr Blair declaring it to be the most masterly satire of its kind in existence. In these days of better taste, a regret will be generally felt that Burns should have been tempted or provoked into such subjects. There is, however, a general belief in Ayrshire, that the *Holy Fair* was attended with a good effect, for since its appearance, the custom of resorting to the 'occasion' in neighbouring parishes for the sake of holiday-making has been much abated, and a great increase of decorous observance has taken place.

During the latter part of June, and the greater part if not the whole of July, the immortal poems were going through the press at Kilmarnock. While preparing to launch so many satiric shafts at the *Old-Light* clergy, Burns was brought into a strange personal relation with one of them. Since it was ruled by the angry father that he and Jean must not be considered as man and wife, it was of course important that their freedom from the bonds of marriage should be fully certified. For this purpose, it was necessary that they should submit to the censures of the church. Accordingly, our poet had now to make a series of public appearances before the congregation—the last of them on the 6th of August, when a rebuke was administered. Mr Auld acted gently with his satirist, and indulged him with permission to stand in his own seat, instead of the common place of repentance, on the condition that, in the event of his prospering in the West Indies, he should remember the poor of Mauchline.

TO JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

MOSSGIEL, *9th July* 1786.

With the sincerest grief I read your letter. You are truly a son of misfortune. I shall be extremely anxious to hear from you how your health goes on—if it is anyway re-establishing, or if Leith promises well—in short, how you feel in the inner man.

I have waited on Armour since her return home; not from the least view of reconciliation, but merely to ask for her health, and, to you I will confess it, from a foolish hankering fondness, very ill placed indeed. The mother forbade me the house, nor did Jean shew that penitence that might have been expected. However, the priest, I am informed, will give me a certificate as a single man, if I comply with the rules of the church, which for that very reason I intend to do.

I am going to put on sackcloth and ashes this day. I am indulged so far as to appear in my own seat. *Peccavi, pater; miserere mei.* My book will be ready in a fortnight. If you have any subscribers, return them by Connell. The Lord stand with the righteous—Amen, amen! R. B.

During this period, too, his pen must have been still very busy. He composed a playful ode

ON A SCOTCH BARD,

GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.

A' ye wha live by sowps o' drink,
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink, versifying
A' ye wha live and never think,
Come, mourn wi' me!
Our billie 's gien us a' a jink,[1]
And owre the sea.

Lament him a' ye rantin' core,
Wha dearly like a random-splore, frolic
Nae mair he 'll join the merry roar
In social key;
For now he 's ta'en anither shore,
And owre the sea!

Auld cantie Kyle may weepers wear,
And stain them wi' the saut, saut tear;
'Twill mak her poor auld heart, I fear,
In flinders flee; splinters
He was her laureate monie a year,
That 's owre the sea.

He saw misfortune's cauld nor-west
Lang mustering up a bitter blast;
A jillet brak his heart at last,
Ill may she be!
So, took a berth afore the mast,
And owre the sea.

To tremble under Fortune's cummock, rod
On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock, meal and water
Wi' his proud, independent stomach,
Could ill agree;
So row't his hurdies in a hammock,
And owre the sea.

He ne'er was gien to great misguiding,
Yet coin his pouches wadna bide in;
Wi' him it ne'er was under hiding—
He dealt it free:
The Muse was a' that he took pride in,
That 's owre the sea.

[1] 'Our brother has eluded us all.'

Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
And hap him in a cozie biel: wrap—snug shelter
Ye'll find him aye a dainty chiel,
And fou o' glee;
He wadna wranged the very deil,
That 's owre the sea.

Fareweel, my rhyme-composing billie!
Your native soil was right ill-willie;
But may ye flourish like a lily,
Now bonnilie!
I 'll toast ye in my hinmost gillie,
Though owre the sea!

In a different spirit, he wrote an epitaph for himself—a confession of his errors so solemn and so touching, as to take the sting from every other comment on the subject:—

A BARD'S EPITAPH.

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool, bashful—succumb
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
Oh, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs himself life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, through the starting tear
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below,
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stained his name!

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious self-control
Is wisdom's root.[1]

Friendship had also its demands upon him. He wrote a Dedication of his Poems to Gavin Hamilton, taking the opportunity not merely to characterise that generous-natured man, but to throw out a few parting sarcasms at orthodoxy and her partisans. This poem, however, was not placed at the front of the forthcoming volume, though included in its pages:—

A DEDICATION TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

Expect na, sir, in this narration,
A fleechin, fleth'rin dedication, — flattering
To roose you up, and ca' you guid, — praise
And sprung o' great and noble bluid,
Because ye 're surnamed like his Grace;[2]
Perhaps related to the race;
Then when I 'm tired, and sae are ye,
Wi' monie a fulsome, sinfu' lie,
Set up a face, how I stop short,
For fear your modesty be hurt.

This may do—maun do, sir, wi' them wha
Maun please the great folk for a wamefou;
For me! sae laigh I needna bow,
For, L— be thankit, I can plough;
And when I downa yoke a naig, — cannot
Then, L— be thankit, I can beg;
Sae I shall say, and that 's nae flatterin',
It 's just sic poet, and sic patron.

The Poet, some guid angel help him,
Or else, I fear, some ill ane skelp him, — beat
He may do weel for a' he 's done yet,
But only he 's no just begun yet.

The Patron (sir, ye maun forgie me,
I winna lie, come what will o' me),
On every hand it will allowed be,
He 's just—nae better than he should be.

[1] See Appendix, No. 9. [2] The Duke of Hamilton.

I readily and freely grant,
He downa see a poor man want;
What 's no his ain he winna tak it,
What ance he says he winna break it;
Ought he can lend he 'll no refus 't
Till aft his gudeness is abused;
And rascals whiles that do him wrang,
Even that, he does na mind it lang:
As master, landlord, husband, father,
He does na fail his part in either.

But then nae thanks to him for a' that,
Nae godly symptom ye can ca' that;
It 's naething but a milder feature
Of our poor sinfu', corrupt nature:
Ye 'll get the best o' moral works,
'Mang black Gentoos and pagan Turks,
Or hunters wild on Ponotaxi,
Wha never heard of orthodoxy.
That he 's the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed,
It 's no through terror of d——tion;
It 's just a carnal inclination.

Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!
Vain is his hope whose stay and trust is
In moral mercy, truth, and justice!

No—stretch a point to catch a plack;
Abuse a brother to his back;
Steal through a winnock frae a w——,
But point the rake that taks the door;
Be to the poor like ony whunstane,
And haud their noses to the grunstane,
Ply every art o' legal thieving;
No matter—stick to sound believing!

Learn three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,
Wi' weel-spread looves, and lang wry faces; palms
Grunt up a solemn, lengthened groan,
And d— a' parties but your own;
I 'll warrant, then, ye 're nae deceiver—
A steady, sturdy, stanch believer.

Oh ye wha leave the springs o' Calvin,
For gumlie dubs of your ain delvin'! muddy
Ye sons of heresy and error,
Ye 'll some day squeel in quaking terror!

When Vengeance draws the sword in wrath,
And in the fire throws the sheath;
When Ruin, with his sweeping besom,
Just frets, till Heaven commission gies him:
While o'er the harp pale Misery moans,
And strikes the ever-deepening tones,
Still louder shrieks, and heavier groans!

Your pardon, sir, for this digression,
I maist forgot my dedication;
But when divinity comes 'cross me,
My readers still are sure to lose me.

So, sir, ye see 'twas nae daft vapour,
But I maturely thought it proper,
When a' my works I did review,
To dedicate them, sir, to you:
Because (ye need na tak it ill)
I thought them something like yoursel'.

Then patronise them wi' your favour,
And your petitioner shall ever——
I had amaist said, ever pray,
But that 's a word I need na say:
For prayin' I hae little skill o't;
I 'm baith dead sweer, and wretched ill o't; unwilling
But I 'se repeat each poor man's prayer
That kens or hears about you, sir—

'May ne'er Misfortune's gowling bark
Howl through the dwelling o' the Clerk![1]
May ne'er his generous, honest heart,
For that same generous spirit smart!
May Kennedy's far-honoured name
Lang beat his hymeneal flame,
Till Hamiltons, at least a dizzen,
Are by their canty fireside risen:
Five bonny lasses round their table,
And seven braw fellows, stout and able,
To serve their king and country weel,
By word, or pen, or pointed steel!
May health and peace, with mutual rays,
Shine on the evening o' his days,
Till his wee curlie John's ier-oe, great-grandchild
When ebbing life nae mair shall flow,
The last, sad mournful rites bestow.'

[1] A sobriquet for Mr Hamilton, probably because of his acting in this capacity to some of the county courts.

I will not wind a lang conclusion
With complimentary effusion:
But whilst your wishes and endeavours
Are blest wi' fortune's smiles and favours,
I am, dear sir, with zeal most fervent,
Your much indebted, humble servant.

But if (which powers above prevent!)
That iron-hearted carl, Want,
Attended in his grim advances
By sad mistakes and black mischances,
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,
Make you as poor a dog as I am,
Your humble servant then no more;
For who would humbly serve the poor?
But by a poor man's hopes in Heaven!
While recollection's power is given,
If, in the vale of humble life,
The victim sad of fortune's strife,
I, through the tender-gushing tear,
Should recognise my master dear,
If friendless, low, we meet together,
Then, sir, your hand—my friend and brother!

Amongst other productions at this crisis, was a

FAREWELL TO THE BRETHREN OF ST JAMES'S LODGE, TORBOLTON.

TUNE—*Good-night, and Joy be wi' you a'.*

Adieu! a heart-warm, fond adieu!
Dear brothers of the *mystic tie!*
Ye favoured, ye *enlightened* few,
Companions of my social joy;
Though I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',
With melting heart, and brimful eye,
I'll mind you still, though far awa'.

Oft have I met your social band,
And spent the cheerful, festive night;
Oft, honoured with supreme command,
Presided o'er the *Sons of Light:*
And by that *hieroglyphic* bright
Which none but *Craftsmen* ever saw!
Strong Memory on my heart shall write
Those happy scenes when far awa'.

May Freedom, Harmony, and Love,
  Unite you in the *grand design*,
Beneath the Omniscient Eye above,
  The glorious Architect Divine!
That you may keep the *unerring line*,
  Still rising by the *plummet's law*,
Till Order bright completely shine,
  Shall be my prayer when far awa'.

And *you*, farewell! whose merits claim,
  Justly, that *highest badge* to wear!
Heaven bless your honoured, noble name,
  To *masonry* and *Scotia* dear!
A last request permit me here,
  When yearly ye assemble a',
One *round*—I ask it with a *tear*—
  To him, *the Bard that's far awa'*.

The person alluded to in the last stanza was Major-general James Montgomery (a younger brother of Hugh Montgomery of Coilsfield), who now enjoyed the dignity of the worshipful Grand Master in this village lodge, while Robert Burns was Depute Master. The ardour of the poet in free-masonry was one of his most conspicuous passions. It seems almost incomprehensible that a mind like his could delight to associate with a set of men so different from himself as the ordinary trades-people of Torbolton, amongst whom probably Dr Hornbook shone as a man of learning and profound sagacity. Yet so it was.

It has been mentioned that he was nominated as Depute Master in July 1784. In the crumbling record of the lodge, he appears as re-elected in July 1785. In this capacity he signs minutes on the 29th June, the 20th July, the 2d and 18th August, the 15th September, the 26th October, the 10th November, the 1st and 7th December, the 7th January 1786, and the 1st March, when his brother Gilbert is entered 'passed and raised.' Apparently during all this time, though living several miles from the village, he had never missed attendance on one of the meetings of the lodge. On several occasions he held subordinate lodges at Mauchline, thus doing the utmost he could to propagate the masonic faith. One of these meetings took place on the 25th May, being eleven days subsequent to the assumed date of the parting with Highland Mary. From the 1st of March, about which time the distressing affair connected with the *Lament* began to harass him, his attendance on the Torbolton lodge was irregular. Dr Hornbook

on one occasion acts as his deputy. His signature appears, however, at the minutes of 7th and 15th June. On the latter occasion there is a curious entry: 'It was proposed by the lodge, that as they much wanted a lodge-room, a proposal be laid before the heritors who are intending to build a steeple here, that the lodge will contribute to the building of *a lodge-room as the basis of that steeple*, and that from the funds of the lodge they offer fifteen pounds, besides what will be advanced from the particular friends of the lodge; in order that this proposal be properly laid before the heritors, five persons—namely, the Right Worshipful Master, Brother M'Math, *Brother Burns*, Brother Wodrow, Brother William Andrew—are appointed to meet on Saturday at one o'clock, to draw up a proposal to lay before the heritors on Friday first.' It is odd to find Burns concerned in a movement to get a mason lodge introduced into a portion of a parish church.

The St James's Lodge at this time met in a small stifling back-room connected with the inn of the village—a humble cottage-like place of entertainment kept by one Manson. On the approach of St John's Day, the 24th of June, when a procession of the lodge was contemplated, Burns sent a rhymed note on the subject to his medical friend Mr Mackenzie, with whom, it may be explained, he had lately had some controversy on the origin of morals:—

Friday first 's the day appointed
By the Right Worshipful anointed,
  To hold our grand procession;
To get a blad o' Johnnie's morals,
And taste a swatch o' Manson's barrels
  I' the way of our profession.
The Master and the Brotherhood
  Would a' be glad to see you;
For me I would be mair than proud
  To share the mercies wi' you. — entertainment
    If Death, then, wi' skaith, then, — hurt
      Some mortal heart is hechtin', — threatening
    Inform him, and storm him,
      That Saturday you 'll fecht him.

ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, *An. M.* 5790.

He was now commencing the printing of his poems, and striving by dissipation to drown the painful recollection of his Jean. His signature likewise appears at the minutes of 29th June, 18th August, 5th October, and 10th November. On some one of these occasions he took an actual farewell of the lodge, but a blithesome

one, probably in anticipation of his journey to Edinburgh. The book contains no notice of the circumstance; but it was faithfully remembered a few years ago by a surviving brother, named John Lees. John said that Burns came in a pair of buckskins, out of which he would always pull the other shilling for the other bowl, till it was five in the morning. 'An awfu' night *that!*'

It may be mentioned, in connection with the preceding paragraphs, that Burns joined on at least one occasion in the festivities of the Kilmarnock Lodge, presided over by his friend William Parker; on which occasion he produced an appropriate song:—

THE SONS OF OLD KILLIE.

TUNE—*Shawnboy.*

Ye sons of Old Killie, assembled by Willie,
  To follow the noble vocation;
Your thrifty old mother has scarce such another
  To sit in that honourèd station.
I've little to say, but only to pray,
  As praying 's the ton of your fashion;
A prayer from the Muse you well may excuse,
  'Tis seldom her favourite passion.

Ye powers who preside o'er the wind and the tide,
  Who markèd each element's border;
Who formèd this frame with beneficent aim,
  Whose sovereign statute is order;
Within this dear mansion may wayward Contention
  Or witherèd Envy ne'er enter;
May Secrecy round be the mystical bound,
  And Brotherly Love be the centre.

We thus see that in the midst of the labours of the press, and the vexations connected with Jean Armour, there were hours of mirth, and something beyond mirth. There were also hours of the finest poetical inspiration. The beautiful estate of Ballochmyle on the Ayr, near Mauchline, had recently been transferred from the Whitefoords to Mr Claud Alexander, a gentleman well connected in the west of Scotland, who had realised a large fortune as paymaster-general of the East India Company's troops in Bengal. He had lately come to reside at the mansion-house. The steep banks of the river at this place form a scene of natural loveliness which has few matches, and Burns loved to wander there. In an evening of early summer, Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, the sister of the new

laird, walking out along the braes after dinner, encountered a plain-looking man in rustic attire, who appeared to be musing, with his shoulder leaning against a tree. According to her own account: 'The grounds being forbidden to unauthorised strangers—the evening being far advanced, and the encounter very sudden—she was startled, but instantly recovered herself, and passed on.' When Burns wrote to the lady some months afterwards, he gave his own account of the rencontre:—'I had roved out,' he says, 'as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my Muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed, who, regardless of your harmonious endeavours to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and to rob you of all the property nature gives you—your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn-twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely-browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene, and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, or met a poet's eye; those visionary bards excepted who hold commerce with aërial beings! Had Calumny and Villainy taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

'What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain, dull, historic prose into metaphor and measure.'

He then added, that during his walk homeward he composed a song descriptive of the scene and the meeting:—

THE BONNIE LASS O' BALLOCHMYLE.

'Twas even—the dewy fields were green,
On every blade the pearls hang![1]
The Zephyr wantoned round the bean,
And bore its fragrant sweets alang;

[1] *Hang*, Scotticism for *hung*.

In every glen the mavis sang,
All nature listening seemed the while,
Except where greenwood echoes rang,
Amang the braes o' Ballochmyle.

With careless step I onward strayed,
My heart rejoiced in Nature's joy,
When, musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanced to spy;
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like Nature's vernal smile,
Perfection whispered passing by,
Behold the lass o' Ballochmyle![1]

Fair is the morn in flowery May,
And sweet is night in Autumn mild;
When roving through the garden gay,
Or wandering in the lonely wild:
But woman, Nature's darling child!
There all her charms she does compile;
Even there her other works are foiled
By the bonnie lass o' Ballochmyle.

Oh had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain!
Though sheltered in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plain,
Through weary winter's wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil;
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonnie lass o' Ballochmyle.

Then pride might climb the slippery steep,
Where fame and honours lofty shine;
And thirst of gold might tempt the deep,
Or downward seek the Indian mine;
Give me the cot below the pine,
To tend the flocks, or till the soil,
And every day has joys divine
With the bonnie lass o' Ballochmyle.

It was in the subsequent November that Burns addressed Miss Alexander, his object being, as stated at the close of the letter, to obtain her consent to the publication of the song, which he enclosed. To his mortification, the lady took no notice of either letter or song. Dr Currie says: 'Her modesty might prevent her

[1] Variation—

The lily's hue and rose's dye
Bespoke the lass o' Ballochmyle.

from perceiving that the Muse of Tibullus breathed in this nameless poet, and that her beauty was awakening strains destined to immortality on the banks of the Ayr. It may be conceived also, that, supposing the verse duly appreciated, delicacy might find it difficult to express its acknowledgments.'

The apology now presented by the family for Miss Alexander's conduct is, that, on inquiring regarding the person who had addressed her, she unfortunately fell amongst those who entertained an unfavourable opinion of his character. Feeling it to be necessary to decline yielding to his request, she thought that that resolution would be intimated most delicately towards him, as well as in the manner most agreeable to herself, by simply allowing the letter to remain unanswered. It is easy to enter into the feelings of a sensible woman of thirty in adopting this course, and even to make some allowance for others not acknowledged, which might cause her to shrink from the acquaintance of a humble tenant of her brother—for Mossgiel now belonged to Mr Alexander—who, in the exercise of an assumed poetic privilege, dared to imagine her as his mistress. However this might be, Miss Alexander and her kindred learned afterwards to think the woods of Ballochmyle classic, and herself immortal, through the genius of Burns. On a question occurring many years after as to the disposal of the original manuscript of the song, Miss Alexander said that there could be no dispute on that point: wherever she went, it must go. The late Mr Alexander, her nephew, erected a bower or rustic seat on the spot where she had met the bard; and for the decoration of this retreat, a fac-simile of the song and letter was affixed in a suitable framing.[1]

The conduct of Jean Armour and her parents had inspired in Burns and all his own relatives a feeling of deep resentment. In the arrangement of his desperate affairs, preparatory to leaving Scotland, he did not feel called upon to make any provision in favour of a family which had contumeliously refused what was the highest justice both to them and to himself. It began to be whispered about Mauchline, that Mr Armour was contemplating legal measures to obtain a guarantee from the poet for the

[1] Dr Currie, by omitting the final sentence of the letter, concealed its immediate object, and he did not state or suggest the family account of Miss Alexander's silence. This is now given from the information of the late amiable Mrs Alexander of Ballochmyle, communicated to me at Ballochmyle in 1837, in the next room to that in which, a few minutes before, I had had the pleasure of lunching with the Bonnie Lass herself, then a fine-looking old lady of cheerful manners and demeanour. She died unmarried in 1843, aged eighty-eight.

support of his expected progeny. Hearing of this, and dreading that the ultimate issue of such procedure would be a jail, Burns left his home, and was for some time lost to the observation of the Mauchline world. He had an aunt named Allan, living at Old Rome Forest, near Kilmarnock, where he had spent many days of late, in order to be near the press of John Wilson. To this place he conveyed a large chest, containing the articles required for his voyage and colonial outfit. Here also he now took up his abode, though not regularly, in order to be out of the way of legal *diligence*.

TO MR JOHN RICHMOND.

OLD ROME FOREST, *30th July* 1786.

MY DEAR RICHMOND—My hour is now come—you and I will never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at furthest, to repair aboard the *Nancy*, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica, and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it? Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail till I find security for an enormous sum. This they keep an entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of; and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son of the gospel, 'have no where to lay my head.' I know you will pour an execration on her head, but spare the poor, ill-advised girl, for my sake. * * * I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn. I can write no more; let me hear from you by the return of coach. I will write you ere I go. I am, dear sir, yours, here and hereafter, R. B.

Follows another letter, probably written about the second week of August:—

TO MONS. JAMES SMITH, MAUCHLINE.

Monday Morning, Mossgiel.

MY DEAR SIR—I went to Dr Douglas yesterday, fully resolved to take the opportunity of Captain Smith; but I found the doctor with a Mr and Mrs White, both Jamaicans, and they have deranged my plans altogether. They assure him that to send me from Savannah la Mar to Port Antonio, will cost my master, Charles Douglas, upwards of fifty pounds, besides running the risk of throwing myself into a pleuritic fever, in consequence of hard travelling in the sun. On these accounts he refuses sending me with Smith; but a vessel sails from Greenock the 1st of September, right for the place of my destination. The captain of her is an intimate friend of Mr Gavin

Hamilton's, and as good a fellow as heart could wish: with him I am destined to go. Where I shall shelter I know not, but I hope to weather the storm. * * *

On Thursday morning, if you can muster as much self-denial as to be out of bed about seven o'clock, I shall see you as I ride through to Cumnock. After all, Heaven bless the sex! I feel there is still happiness for me among them:

> Oh, woman, lovely woman! Heaven designed you
> To temper man!—we had been brutes without you!

R. B.

It was in this extraordinary climax of circumstances—his mistress's father pursuing him at law, in order to extort from him the money received for his poems; himself skulking to preserve his liberty, that he might be enabled to embrace a miserable course of life offered to him in Jamaica—that Burns brought forth his wondrous volume. How impressively do the circumstances seem to verify the remark, that effusions of great genius ever tend to a connection with heart-break and humiliation! There is but one relieving fact—that the merits of the poor peasant of Mossgiel, and his generous social character, had, in spite of every drawback in his own follies, or rather sins, raised for him the friendship of many worthy people of his neighbourhood. Hamilton of Mauchline, Aiken and Ballantyne of Ayr, Muir and Parker of Kilmarnock, had all acted like true-hearted kindly men in giving and obtaining patronage to the poet. The last-mentioned person had put down his name for thirty-five copies. The volume appeared at the end of July, with the simple title, *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns,* and the motto:

> 'The Simple Bard, unbroke to rules of art,
> He pours the wild effusions of the heart.
> And if inspired, 'tis Nature's powers inspire;
> Hers all the melting thrill, and hers the kindling fire.'

ANONYMOUS.

It contained the following pieces:—The Twa Dogs—Scotch Drink—The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer—The Holy Fair—Address to the Deil—Mailie—To J. S**** [Smith]—A Dream—The Vision—Halloween—The Auld Farmer's New-year Morning's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie—The Cotter's Saturday Night—To a Mouse—Epistle to Davie—The Lament—Despondency, an Ode—Man was Made to Mourn—Winter, a Dirge—A Prayer in the Prospect of Death—To a Mountain Daisy—To Ruin—Epistle to a Young Friend—On a Scotch Bard gone to the West Indies—

A Dedication to G**** H*******, Esq.—To a Louse—Epistle to J. L******, an old Scots Bard—To the Same—Epistle to W. S******, Ochiltree—Epistle to J. R******—Song, 'It was upon a Lammas Night'—Song, 'Now Westlin' Winds'—Song, 'From thee, Eliza, I must go'—The Farewell to the Brethren of St James's Lodge, Torbolton—Epitaphs and Epigrams—A Bard's Epitaph.

It was introduced by the following preface:—

'The following trifles are not the production of the poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegances and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these and other celebrated names, their countrymen, are, in their original languages, *a fountain shut up, and a book sealed.* Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him in his and their native language. Though a rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality, of friendship, wakened his vanity so far as to make him think anything of his worth shewing; and none of the following works were ever composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind—these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward.

'Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless bard, shrinks aghast at the thought of being branded as—an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looks upon himself as a poet of no small consequence forsooth!

'It is an observation of that celebrated poet,[1] whose divine elegies do honour to our language, our nation, and our species, that "*Humility* has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!" If any critic catches at the word *genius*, the author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done would be a manœuvre below the worst character which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the

[1] Shenstone.

poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces, but rather with a view to kindle at their flame than for servile imitation.

'To his subscribers, the author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the learned and the polite, who may honour him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life; but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of dulness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned, without mercy, to contempt and oblivion.'

He plainly announces here the consciousness of possessing some degree of ability. He told Dr Moore, a twelvemonth after, that he was pretty confident his poems would meet with some applause. I must own that there is something satisfactory in knowing that Burns perceived the superiority of his verses before the world had put its stamp upon them. It would have told as a blindness derogatory to the powers of his mind if he had not. Still, the great tribunal was to be passed, and he was justified in regarding its decision as doubtful. It was not long so, as far as Ayrshire and the adjacent districts were concerned. Robert Heron, then a young literary aspirant residing in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, relates that by old and young the volume of Burns's poems was everywhere received with delight and admiration. He himself got the book into his hands at night, and he slept not till he had read it through. 'Even ploughboys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned most hardly, and which they required to purchase necessary clothing, if they might but procure the works of Burns.' The edition had been one of 600 copies, for 350 of which subscribers had been obtained before publication. It appears that there had been an immediate sale beyond that list, for in little more than two months a reprint was under discussion, and the impression thought of was 1000. The speculation, when all expenses were cleared, left about twenty pounds in Burns's pocket.[1]

[1] See Appendix, No. 10.

TO MR JOHN KENNEDY.

KILMARNOCK [*between 3d and 16th August*], 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—Your truly facetious epistle of the 3d instant gave me much entertainment. I was only sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as I passed your way, but we shall bring up all our leeway on Wednesday the 16th current, when I hope to have it in my power to call on you, and take a kind, very probably a last adieu, before I go for Jamaica; and I expect orders to repair to Greenock every day. I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class. Could I have got a carrier, you should have had a score of vouchers for my authorship; but, now you have them, let them speak for themselves.

Farewell, dear friend! may guid-luck hit you,
And 'mang her favourites admit you,
If e'er Detraction shore to smit you, threaten
May nane believe him,
And ony deil that thinks to get you,
Good L—, deceive him. R. B.

THE FAREWELL.

'The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what does he regard his single woes?
But when, alas! he multiplies himself,
To dearer selves, to the loved tender fair,
To those whose bliss, whose being hangs upon him,
To helpless children!—then, oh then! he feels
The point of misery festering in his heart,
And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward.
Such, such am I! undone!'

THOMSON'S *Edward and Eleanora.*

Farewell, old Scotia's bleak domains,
Far dearer than the torrid plains
Where rich ananas blow!
Farewell, a mother's blessing dear!
A brother's sigh! a sister's tear!
My Jean's heart-rending throe!
Farewell, my Bess! though thou 'rt bereft
Of my parental care,
A faithful brother I have left,
My part in him thou 'lt share!
Adieu too, to you too,
My Smith, my bosom frien';
When kindly you mind me,
Oh then befriend my Jean!

What bursting anguish tears my heart!
From thee, my Jeanie, must I part?
  Thou, weeping, answ'rest 'No!'
Alas! misfortune stares my face,
And points to ruin and disgrace,
  I for thy sake must go!
Thee, Hamilton, and Aiken dear,
  A grateful, warm adieu!
I, with a much-indebted tear,
  Shall still remember you!
    All-hail then, the gale then,
      Wafts me from thee, dear shore!
    It rustles, and whistles—
      I 'll never see thee more!

LINES WRITTEN ON A BANK-NOTE.[1]

Wae worth thy power, thou cursed leaf,
Fell source o' a' my wo and grief:
For lack o' thee I 've lost my lass,
For lack o' thee I scrimp my glass; stint
I see the children of affliction
Unaided, through thy cursed restriction.
I 've seen the oppressor's cruel smile
Amid his hapless victim's spoil,
And, for thy potence, vainly wished
To crush the villain in the dust.
For lack o' thee I leave this much-loved shore,
Never perhaps to greet old Scotland more.

R. B.—Kyle.

WRITTEN

ON A BLANK LEAF OF A COPY OF THE POEMS, PRESENTED TO AN OLD SWEETHEART,[2] THEN MARRIED.

Once fondly loved, and still remembered dear:
  Sweet early object of my youthful vows!
Accept this mark of friendship, warm, sincere—
  Friendship! 'tis all cold duty now allows.

And when you read the simple artless rhymes,
  One friendly sigh for him—he asks no more,
Who distant burns in flaming torrid climes,
  Or haply lies beneath th' Atlantic's roar.

[1] 'The above verses, in the handwriting of Burns, are copied from a bank-note, in the possession of Mr James F. Gracie of Dumfries. The note is of the Bank of Scotland, and is dated so far back as 1st March 1780.'—MOTHERWELL.

[2] According to Dr Currie, this old sweetheart was the *fillette* whom the poet had seen at Kirkoswald, when he was attending school there. If so, she was a Mrs Neilson, living in Ayr.

VERSES WRITTEN UNDER VIOLENT GRIEF.[1]

Accept the gift a friend sincere
  Wad on thy worth be pressin';
Remembrance oft may start a tear,
But oh! that tenderness forbear,
  Though 'twad my sorrows lessen.

My morning raise sae clear and fair,
  I thought sair storms wad never
Bedew the scene; but grief and care
In wildest fury hae made bare
  My peace, my hope, for ever!

You think I 'm glad; oh, I pay weel
  For a' the joy I borrow,
In solitude—then, then I feel
I canna to mysel' conceal
  My deeply-ranklin' sorrow.

Farewell! within thy bosom free
  A sigh may whiles awaken;
A tear may wet thy laughin' e'e,
For Scotia's son—ance gay like thee—
  Now hopeless, comfortless, forsaken!

Burns had made an engagement with Mr Charles Douglas of Port Antonio, to act as book-keeper or assistant-overseer on his estate for three years, at thirty pounds a year. Mr John Hutchinson, a correspondent of the bard at St Ann's, Jamaica, afterwards congratulated him on being saved from going there, 'as,' says he, 'I have great reason to believe that Mr Douglas's employ would by no means have answered your expectations.'[2] So humble and so doubtful was the alternative to which the wretchedness of his position at home had reduced him. It was even feared by the bard that poverty would oblige him to 'indent himself'—by which we presume is meant, become bound as apprentices are—in order that Mr Douglas might pay his passage to the West Indies. From this last humiliation he was only saved by the success of his volume. As soon as he was master of nine guineas, he took a steerage-passage in a vessel which was expected to sail from Greenock at the beginning of September.

[1] These verses were probably written, like the preceding, on a copy of the volume of poems. They were first published in the *Sun* newspaper, April 1823.

[2] Currie's edition of Burns, General Correspondence, No. xxxii.

During August, the poet seems to have been busied chiefly in collecting the money due for his poems. In all the principal towns of his own district, he had friends who had exerted themselves in procuring subscribers, and who were now drawing money on his behalf. His friend Aiken had been the medium for distributing no fewer than a hundred and forty-five copies, being nearly a fourth of the whole impression. In the course of his rounds, Burns came to Maybole, where his Kirkoswald friend 'Willie' had been doing what he could for the sale of the book. The bard was in the highest spirits, for, as he acknowledged, he had never before been in possession of so much ready cash. Willie assembled a few choice spirits at the King's Arms, to do honour to the bard; and they spent a happy night together, Burns being, as usual, the life and soul of the party. He had, as we know, heavy griefs hanging at his heart; but amongst genial men, over a glass of Scotch drink, no pain could long molest him. Comic verses flashed from his mouth *al improvviso*, to the astonishment of the company, all of whom felt that a paragon of mirthful genius had come before them. In the pride of his heart next morning, he determined on hiring from his host a certain poor hack mare, well known along the whole road from Glasgow to Port Patrick as a beast that could now do little better (to use his own words) than

—— 'hoyte and hoble,
And wintle like a sawmont coble.'

Willie and a few others of his Maybole friends walked out of town before him, for the purpose of taking leave at a particular spot; and before he came up, they had, by way of keeping up the style of the preceding evening, prepared a few mock heroics in which to bid him speed on his journey. Burns received their salute with a subdued merriment; and when their spokesman had done, broke out with: 'What need of all this fine parade of verse, my friends? It would have been quite enough if you had said just this—

Here comes Burns
On Rosinante;
She's d—— poor,
But he's d—— canty!'

And then he went on his way. Is it not pleasant, even in so trivial an anecdote as this, to catch a glimpse of the poet in those holiday moments of the spirit which streaked fitfully this period of gloom allied to despair?[1]

[1] See Appendix, No. 10.

After a few weeks, when the admiration everywhere expressed for the Poems began to throw a lustre on the name of Burns, and to point his way to a better fate, his mistress's father ceased to give him any reason for fear regarding his personal liberty. He was living quietly at Mossgiel when, on a Sunday evening, 3d September, a brother of his mistress came out to tell him that Jean had proved the mother of twins, and to consult about the baptism of the infants. It was agreed that the Mossgiel family should take charge of the one, a boy, while the mother's friends should retain the other, a girl, who, however, did not long survive. With this arrangement ended the circumstances immediately connected with the irregular union of Burns and Jean Armour—a most sad example of the legalised indecorum called a Scotch marriage, followed by the grosser outrage of a divorce dictated by the arbitrary will of a third party, and effected by the simple burning of a piece of paper. What is strangest of all, though the fact was not suspected by any of the parties, there is now reason to believe that the marriage never was legally annulled; and that, consequently, these infants were legitimate in all but popular acceptation.

TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

MOSSGIEL, *Friday Morning* [*Sept.?* 1786.]

MY FRIEND, MY BROTHER—Warm recollection of an absent friend presses so hard upon my heart, that I send him the prefixed bagatelle, pleased with the thought that it will greet the man of my bosom, and be a kind of distant language of friendship.

You will have heard that poor Armour has repaid me double. A very fine boy and a girl have awakened a thought and feelings that thrill, some with tender pleasure, and some with foreboding anguish, through my soul.

The poem was nearly an extemporaneous production, on a wager with Mr Hamilton that I would not produce a poem on the subject in a given time.

If you think it worth while, read it to Charles and Mr W. Parker; and if they choose a copy of it, it is at their service, as they are men whose friendship I shall be proud to claim, both in this world and that which is to come.

I believe all hopes of staying at home will be abortive; but more of this when, in the latter part of next week, you shall be troubled with a visit from, my dear sir, your most devoted,

R. B.

The bagatelle was the following well-known piece:—

THE CALF.

TO THE REV. MR JAMES STEVEN,[1]

On his Text, *Malachi*, iv. 2.—'And ye shall go forth, and grow up as CALVES of the stall.'

Right, sir! your text I'll prove it true,
  Though heretics may laugh;
For instance, there's yoursel' just now,
  God knows, an unco calf!

And should some patron be so kind,
  As bless you wi' a kirk,
I doubt na, sir, but then we'll find
  Ye're still as great a stirk.

But if the lover's raptured hour
  Shall ever be your lot,
Forbid it, every heavenly power,
  You e'er should be a stot!

Though, when some kind, connubial dear,
  Your but-and-ben adorns,
The like has been that you may wear
  A noble head of horns.

And in your lug, most reverend James,
  To hear you roar and rowte, bellow
Few men o' sense will doubt your claims
  To rank amang the nowte. cattle

And when ye're numbered wi' the dead,
  Below a grassy hillock,
Wi' justice they may mark your head—
  'Here lies a famous bullock!'

To this period are to be referred a few stray pieces. Mr William Chalmers, writer in Ayr, who had drawn up an assignation of the bard's property, was in love, and it occurred to him to ask Burns to address the admired object in his behalf. The poet, who had

[1] Afterwards minister of one of the Scotch churches in London, and ultimately of Kilwinning, in Ayrshire. The tradition in the family of Mr Gavin Hamilton is, that the poet, in passing to the church at Mauchline, called at Mr Hamilton's, who, being confined with the gout, could not accompany him, but desired him, as parents do with children, to bring home a note of the text. At the conclusion of the service, Burns called again, and sitting down for a minute at Mr Hamilton's business-table, scribbled these verses, by way of a compliance with the request. From a memorandum by Burns himself, it would appear that there was also a wager with Mr Hamilton as to his producing a poem in a certain time, and that he gained it by inditing *The Calf*.

seen the lady, but was scarcely acquainted with her, readily complied by producing the following specimen of vicarious courtship:—

WILLIE CHALMERS.

Wi' braw new branks in mickle pride, bridle
And eke a braw new brechan, collar
My Pegasus I 'm got astride,
And up Parnassus pechin'; panting
Whiles owre a bush wi' downward crush,
The doited beastie stammers; stupid
Then up he gets, and off he sets
For sake o' Willie Chalmers.

I doubt na, lass, that weel-kenned name
May cost a pair o' blushes;
I am nae stranger to your fame,
Nor his warm urged wishes.
Your bonny face sae mild and sweet,
His honest heart enamours,
And faith ye 'll no be lost a whit,
Though waired on Willie Chalmers. spent

Auld Truth hersel' might swear ye 're fair,
And Honour safely back her,
And Modesty assume your air,
And ne'er a ane mistak' her:
And sic twa love-inspiring een
Might fire even holy palmers;
Nae wonder, then, they 've fatal been
To honest Willie Chalmers.

I doubt na fortune may you shore promise
Some mim-mou'd pouthered priestie, prim
Fu' lifted up wi' Hebrew lore,
And band upon his breastie:
But oh! what signifies to you
His lexicons and grammars;
The feeling heart 's the royal blue,
And that 's wi' Willie Chalmers.

Some gapin' glowrin' country laird
May warsle for your favour;
May claw his lug, and straik his beard, ear
And hoast up some palaver. cough
My bonny maid, before ye wed
Sic clumsy-witted hammers,
Seek Heaven for help, and barefit skelp
Awa' wi' Willie Chalmers.

Forgive the Bard! my fond regard
  For ane that shares my bosom,
Inspires my Muse to gie 'm his dues,
  For deil a hair I roose him. flatter
May powers aboon unite you soon,
  And fructify your amours,
And every year come in mair dear
  To you and Willie Chalmers.

TAM SAMSON'S ELEGY.[1]

'An honest man's the noblest work of God.'—POPE.

Has auld Kilmarnock seen the deil?
Or great M'Kinlay[2] thrawn his heel?
Or Robertson[3] again grown weel
  To preach and read?[4]
'Na, waur than a'!' cries ilka chiel—
  Tam Samson's dead!

Kilmarnock lang may grunt and grane,
And sigh, and sob, and greet her lane,
And cleed her bairns, man, wife, and wean,
  In mourning weed;
To Death she's dearly paid the kane—
  Tam Samson's dead!

The brethren o' the mystic level
May hing their head in woefu' bevel,
While by their nose the tears will revel,
  Like ony bead;
Death 's gien the lodge an unco devel— blow
  Tam Samson's dead!

When Winter muffles up his cloak,
And binds the mire like a rock;
When to the loch the curlers flock
  Wi' gleesome speed,
Wha will they station at the cock?—
  Tam Samson's dead!

[1] Thomas Samson was one of the poet's Kilmarnock friends—a nursery and seedsman of ood credit, a zealous sportsman, and a good fellow.

[2] A preacher, a great favourite with the million. See *The Ordination*, stanza ii.—*B.*

[3] Another preacher, an equal favourite with the few, who was at that time ailing. For m also see *The Ordination*, stanza ix.—*B.*

[4] For a minister to read his sermons, as is often done by those of moderate denomination, often a cause of great unpopularity in Scotland.

He was the king o' a' the core,
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink like Jehu roar
In time o' need;
But now he lags on Death's hog-score—
Tam Samson's dead![1]

Now safe the stately sawmont sail,
And trouts be-dropped wi' crimson hail,
And eels weel kenned for souple tail,
And geds for greed,
Since dark in Death's fish-creel we wail
Tam Samson dead!

Rejoice, ye birring paitricks a';
Ye cootie[2] moorcocks crously craw;
Ye maukins, cock your fud fu' braw, hares
Withouten dread;
Your mortal fae is now awa'—
Tam Samson's dead!

That woefu' morn be ever mourned
Saw him in shootin' graith adorned, dress
While pointers round impatient burned,
Frae couples freed;
But, och! he gaed, and ne'er returned!—
Tam Samson's dead!

In vain auld age his body batters;
In vain the gout his ankles fetters;
In vain the burns cam' down like waters
An acre braid!
Now every auld wife, greetin', clatters weeping
Tam Samson's dead!

Owre many a weary hag he limpit,
And aye the tither shot he thumpit,
Till coward Death behind him jumpit,
Wi' deadly feide;
Now he proclaims, wi' tout o' trumpet,
Tam Samson's dead!

When at his heart he felt the dagger,
He reeled his wonted bottle-swagger,

[1] In this verse are several terms of the curler's art. The *hog-score* is a line crossing the course, near its extremity: a stone which does not pass it is held as disgraced, and is set aside.

[2] A term applied to those fowls whose legs are clad with feathers.—JAMIESON.

But yet he drew the mortal trigger
Wi' weel-aimed heed;
'L—, five!' he cried, and owre did stagger—
Tam Samson 's dead!

Ilk hoary hunter mourned a brither;
Ilk sportsman youth bemoaned a father;
Yon auld gray stane, amang the heather,
Marks out his head,
Where Burns has wrote, in rhyming blether,
Tam Samson 's dead!

There low he lies, in lasting rest;
Perhaps upon his mouldering breast
Some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest,
To hatch and breed;
Alas! nae mair he 'll them molest!—
Tam Samson 's dead!

When August winds the heather wave,
And sportsmen wander by yon grave,
Three volleys let his memory crave
O' pouther and lead,
Till Echo answer frae her cave,
Tam Samson 's dead!

Heaven rest his saul, where'er he be!
Is th' wish o' monie mae than me;
He had twa fauts, or maybe three,
Yet what remead?
Ae social, honest man want we:
Tam Samson 's dead!

EPITAPH.

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,
Ye canting zealots spare him;
If honest worth in heaven rise,
Ye 'll mend or ye win near him.

PER CONTRA.

Go, Fame, and canter like a fillie
Through a' the streets and neuks o' Killie,[1]
Tell every social, honest billie
To cease his grievin',
For yet, unskaithed by Death's gleg gullie, sharp knife
Tam Samson 's leevin'![2]

[1] Killie is a phrase the country-folks sometimes use for Kilmarnock.—*B.*

[2] When this worthy old sportsman went out last muirfowl season, he supposed it was to be,

The poet's cousin and correspondent at Montrose had heard of his design to leave Scotland, and sent to plead for a visit before he should depart.

TO MR BURNES, MONTROSE.

MOSSGIEL, *September* 26, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—I this moment receive yours—receive it with the honest hospitable warmth of a friend's welcome. Whatever comes from you wakens always up the better blood about my heart, which your kind little recollections of my parental friends carries as far as

in Ossian's phrase, 'the last of his fields,' and expressed an ardent wish to die and be buried in the muirs. On this hint the author composed his elegy and epitaph.—*B.*

'The following anecdote was communicated by an intimate of Burns, the late William Parker, Esq. of Assloss, a gentleman whose excellent social qualities, and kind, hospitable disposition, will be long remembered in Ayrshire:—

'At a jovial meeting one evening in Kilmarnock, at which Burns, Mr Parker, and Mr Samson were present, the poet, after the glass had circulated pretty freely, said "He had indited a few lines, which, with the company's permission, he would read to them." The proposal was joyfully acceded to, and the poet immediately read aloud his inimitable *Tam Samson's Elegy*—

"Has auld Kilmarnock seen the deil?" &c.

The company was convulsed with laughter, with the exception of one individual—the subject, *videlicet*, of the verses. As the burden, "Tam Samson's dead," came round, Tam twisted and turned his body into all variety of postures, evidently not on a bed of roses. Burns saw the bait had taken, and fixing his keen black eye on his victim (Sir Walter Scott says that Burns had the finest eyes in his head he had ever seen in mortal), mercilessly pursued his sport with waggish glee. At last flesh and blood could stand it no longer. Tam, evidently anything but pleased, roared out vociferously: "On ay, but I'm no deid yet!" Shouts of laughter followed from the rest, and Burns continued to read, ever and anon interrupted with Tam's "Ay, but I'm no deid yet!" After he had finished, Burns took an opportunity of slipping out quietly, and returned in a few minutes with his well-known

"PER CONTRA.

Go, Fame, and canter like a fillie
Through a' the streets and neuks o' Killie;
Tell every social, honest billie
To cease his grievin',
For yet, unskaithed by Death's gleg gullie,
Tam Samson's leevin'."

We need not say that Tam was propitiated. Like the "humble auld beggar," in our humorous old Scotch ballad, "He helpit to drink his ain dregie," and the night was spent in the usual joyous manner where Burns was the presiding genius.—MERCATOR.' (*From a Glasgow newspaper, Dec.* 7, 1850.

The monument of Samson, a plain slab at the west end of the church of Kilmarnock, contains the following inscription:—

'THOMAS SAMSON,
Died the 12th December 1795,
Aged 72 years.

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,
Ye canting zealots spare him;
If honest worth in heaven rise,
Ye'll mend or ye win near him.—BURNS.'

it will go. 'Tis there that man is blest! 'Tis there, my friend, man feels a consciousness of something within him above the trodden clod! The grateful reverence to the hoary (earthly) author of his being—the burning glow when he clasps the woman of his soul to his bosom—the tender yearnings of heart for the little angels to whom he has given existence—these nature has poured in milky streams about the human heart; and the man who never rouses them to action, by the inspiring influences of their proper objects, loses by far the most pleasurable part of his existence.

My departure is uncertain, but I do not think it will be till after harvest. I will be on very short allowance of time indeed, if I do not comply with your friendly invitation. When it will be, I don't know; but if I can make my wish good, I will endeavour to drop you a line some time before. My best compliments to Mrs ——; I should [be] equally mortified should I drop in when she is abroad; but of that I suppose there is little chance.

What I have wrote, Heaven knows; I have not time to review it: so accept of it in the beaten way of friendship. With the ordinary phrase—perhaps rather more than the ordinary sincerity—I am, dear sir, ever yours, R. B.

Amongst men of some figure in the district who took notice of Burns in consequence of his publication, was Mr M'Adam of Craigengillan, as appears from a versified note of the bard:—

TO MR M'ADAM OF CRAIGENGILLAN.

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card,
  I trow it made me proud;
'See wha taks notice o' the Bard!'
  I lap and cried fu' loud.

Now diel-ma-care about their jaw,
  The senseless, gawky million:
I 'll cock my nose aboon them a'—
  I 'm roosed by Craigengillan! praised

'Twas noble, sir; 'twas like yourscl'
  To grant your high protection:
A great man's smile, ye ken fu' well,
  Is aye a blest infection;—

Though, by his[1] banes who in a tub
  Matched Macedonian Sandy!
On my ain legs through dirt and dub,
  I independent stand aye.

[1] Diogenes.

And when those legs to guid, warm kail,
  Wi' welcome canna bear me;
A lee dike-side, a sybow-tail, leek
  And barley-scone, shall cheer me.

Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath
  O' many flowery simmers!
And bless your bonny lasses baith—
  I 'm tauld they 're lo'esome kimmers! girls

And God bless young Dunaskin's laird,
  The blossom of our gentry!
And may he wear an auld man's beard,
  A credit to his country!

We are told by Gilbert Burns, that Sir William Cunningham of Robertland paid the bard some flattering attentions. It also appears that a lady whom he had approached in earlier days, when accompanying David Sillar to chat with the maidens in her hall, now renewed his acquaintance in a manner which he felt to be kind and considerate. He addressed her thus:—

TO MRS STEWART OF STAIR.

[*August ?*] 1786.

MADAM—The hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promise so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs, &c., which never made their appearance, except to a friend or two at most. Perhaps some of them may be no great entertainment to you, but of that I am far from being an adequate judge. The song to the tune of Ettrick Banks [*The Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle*] you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript. I think myself it has some merit, both as a tolerable description of one of Nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening, and one of the finest pieces of Nature's workmanship, the finest, indeed, we know anything of—an amiable, beautiful young woman;[1] but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing

[1] Miss Alexander.

of your connections in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found—the company of your compeers; and more, I am afraid that even the most refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure remember—the reception I got when I had the honour of waiting on you at Stair. I am little acquainted with politeness, but I know a good deal of benevolence of temper and goodness of heart. Surely did those in exalted stations know how happy they could make some classes of their inferiors by condescension and affability, they would never stand so high, measuring out with every look the height of their elevation, but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs Stewart of Stair. R. B.

Another person of local eminence whose friendly regard Burns obtained through the merit of his poetical volume, was the Rev. Mr George Lawrie, minister of the parish of Loudon, a few miles from Mossgiel. This appears to have been a remarkably fine specimen of the old moderate clergy of the Scottish establishment —sensible, upright, kind-hearted, and with no mean taste in literature. He was the friend of Blair, Robertson, Blacklock, and other distinguished men of the period, and it had been his fortune to serve as the medium by which Macpherson's Ossianic fragments were brought under the attention of the first mentioned of these literati, by whom they were submitted to the world. Lawrie had read the Poems with a high sense of their merit, but in a case so extraordinary, he was not inclined to trust entirely to his own judgment. He sent the book to his friend Blacklock in Edinburgh, asking his opinion of it, and hinting that it would be well to communicate it to Dr Blair, if that could be conveniently accomplished.

At Loudon manse, in a beautiful situation on Irvine Water, entitled St Margaret's Hill, the rustic bard paid the good minister a visit. He was received with the greatest cordiality, and immediately found himself in the midst of what was to him a scene equally novel and charming. Besides the mild matron, there were—a son rising into manhood, three beautiful and accomplished daughters, 'woman-grown,' and one of tenderer years. One of the young ladies played the spinnet to Burns—the first time he had ever heard such an instrument. He told her that she knew the magic way to a poet's heart. Among the liberalities of Mr Lawrie was a love of dancing, with a conviction that it was useful in promoting health and cheerfulness in his house. Scarcely a day passed in the manse when this exercise was not indulged. It was,

therefore, exactly what might have been expected, that after dinner, or in the course of the evening, there was a dance, led by the excellent pastor and his lady, and in which Burns and other guests joined. Burns, it may be observed, though somewhat heavy-limbed, was a good dancer. Miss Louisa afterwards stated the interesting observation she made on this occasion, that the bard 'kept time admirably.' He retired for the night, with feelings deeply touched by the simple refinement, good-nature, and mutual affection of this family, as well as by the unaffected kindness which had been shewn to himself. In the morning, finding him somewhat unprompt in coming down to breakfast, young Mr Archibald went up to inquire for him, and meeting him on the stair, asked how he had slept. 'Not well,' said the bard; 'the fact is, I have been praying half the night. If you go up to my room, you will find my prayers on the table.' It really was so. The young man found the well-known verses afterwards published by Burns with a descriptive title:—

LYING AT A FRIEND'S HOUSE ONE NIGHT, THE AUTHOR LEFT THE FOLLOWING

VERSES

IN THE ROOM WHERE HE SLEPT:—

Oh thou dread Power, who reign'st above,
  I know thou wilt me hear,
When for this scene of peace and love
  I make my prayer sincere!

The hoary sire—the mortal stroke,
  Long, long be pleased to spare,
To bless his filial little flock,
  And shew what good men are.

She, who her lovely offspring eyes
  With tender hopes and fears,
Oh bless her with a mother's joys,
  But spare a mother's tears!

Their hope, their stay, their darling youth,
  In manhood's dawning blush—
Bless him, thou God of love and truth,
  Up to a parent's wish!

The beauteous, seraph sister-band,
  With earnest tears I pray,
Thou know'st the snares on every hand—
  Guide thou their steps alway.

When soon or late they reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May they rejoice, no wanderer lost—
A family in heaven!

It may be imagined with what pleasure the family would receive this elegant tribute of regard from one whom they only knew in consequence of the admiration in which they held his talents. But it appears, that we are not to consider the Prayer as the only expression which the poet gave of the feeling inspired by the mirthful scene of the preceding evening. Miss Louisa Lawrie possessed a scrap of verse in the poet's handwriting—a mere trifle, but apparently intended as part of a lyric description of the manse festivities. 'The locality,' says a relative of the family, 'corresponds perfectly—the old castle of Newmills, visible from the manse windows in those days, before the trees were grown up—the hills opposite to the south—and the actual scene of enjoyment, standing on the very banks of the Irvine. Some little licence must be granted to the poet with respect to his lengthening the domestic dance so far into the night.'

The night was still, and o'er the hill
The moon shone on the castle wa';
The mavis sang, while dew-drops hang
Around her, on the castle wa'.

Sae merrily they danced the ring,
Frae eenin' till the cock did craw;
And aye the o'erword o' the spring,
Was Irvine's bairns are bonny a'.

The time for parting came, and the benevolent host was left by Burns under feelings deeply affected by the consideration that so bright a genius should be contemplating a destiny so dismal as a clerkship in the West Indies. As yet, however, Mr Lawrie felt himself unable to suggest or promote any plan by which a better prospect might be opened to the young poet. A wide stretch of moor had to be passed by Burns on his way home.[1] 'His mind was strongly affected by parting for ever with a scene where he had tasted so much elegant and social pleasure, and depressed by the contrasted gloom of his prospects. The aspect of nature harmonised with his feelings. It was a lowering and heavy evening in the end [beginning?] of autumn. The wind was

[1] Professor Walker gives the ensuing narration from the conversation of Burns in Edinburgh.

up, and whistled through the rushes and long spear-grass which bent before it. The clouds were driving across the sky; and cold pelting showers at intervals added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind.' Under these circumstances, and in this frame, Burns composed what he considered as 'the last song he should ever measure in Caledonia:'—

THE GLOOMY NIGHT IS GATHERING FAST.

TUNE—*Roslin Castle.*

The gloomy night is gathering fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast;
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
The hunter now has left the moor,
The scattered coveys meet secure;
While here I wander, pressed with care,
Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her ripening corn,
By early Winter's ravage torn;
Across her placid, azure sky,
She sees the scowling tempest fly;
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave—
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonny banks of Ayr.

'Tis not the surging billow's roar,
'Tis not that fatal deadly shore;
Though death in every shape appear,
The wretched have no more to fear!
But round my heart the ties are bound,
That heart transpierced with many a wound;
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,
To leave the bonny banks of Ayr.

Farewell old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!
Farewell, my friends! farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare;
Farewell the bonny banks of Ayr!

In a modest mansion in the outskirts of Edinburgh dwelt that remarkable man, Dr Thomas Blacklock—blind from early infancy,

yet a poet, a clergyman, and a man of comprehensive intelligence —possessed, moreover, of the kindest and most benevolent nature, and beloved, accordingly, by all who approached him. Thirteen years before, Samuel Johnson had visited this amiable person, and relenting in the contemplation of so much gentle goodness, joined to a patient resignation under one of the severest of natural deprivations, had said 'with a humane complacency,' as Boswell expresses it: 'Dear Dr Blacklock, I am glad to see you.' Cruelly disappointed of a clerical charge, in consequence of his blindness, Blacklock had settled into a humble but respectable mode of living, as the keeper of a boarding establishment for young men attending school and college. He was himself of course not richer than befitted a son of the Muses; but this neither chilled his benevolent heart nor dulled his poetical sensibilities. Dr Walker says: 'If the young men were enumerated whom he drew from obscurity, and enabled, by education, to advance themselves in life, the catalogue would naturally excite surprise.' On reading the volume of Poems sent to him by his friend Lawrie, he experienced sensations which he must be allowed to describe for himself. The following is the letter he addressed on the occasion to his correspondent at St Margaret's Hill:[1]—

TO MR GEORGE LAWRIE, V.D.M.[2]

ST MARGARET'S HILL, KILMARNOCK.

EDIN. *Sept.* 4, 1786.

'REV. AND DEAR SIR—I ought to have acknowledged your favour long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest and perhaps one of the most genuine entertainments of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the Poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of nature's force or beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and

[1] This letter, certainly one of the most interesting documents connected with Scottish literary history, is now in the possession of the Rev. Balfour Graham, minister of North Berwick, son-in-law of the late Rev. Archibald Lawrie, the son of Blacklock's correspondent.

[2] V. D. M.—*i. e.* Verbi Dei Minister.

increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse; but whether from declining life, or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that intention.

'Mr Stewart, Professor of Morals in this University, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers; but whether this was done or not I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr Blair, but will take care to have the Poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman, to whom I shewed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were therefore much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published in my memory. * * *

T. BLACKLOCK.'

Mr Lawrie—whose gratification in receiving such a confirmation of his own opinion, and one so calculated to inspire better hopes of the future fortunes of Burns, must have been extreme—lost no time in communicating the letter to Mr Gavin Hamilton, that it might be placed in the hands of the poet. The receipt of it at Mossgiel was as a burst of sunshine on a wintry day. Burns says truly, 'The doctor belonged to a set of critics for whose applause I had not dared to hope.' New prospects were, as he says, opened to his poetic ambition. With persons of reflection, however, hopes that come after long experience of depression and suffering are usually succeeded by new fears. Burns says: 'His [Blacklock's] opinion that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance or a single letter of introduction.' In this there is only a general truth. Blacklock said nothing of Edinburgh, and Burns did not proceed to that city till upwards of two months after. No doubt the letter had acted as an invitation to try his fortune in the capital; but it had not the immediate effect of attracting him thither. For weeks after its receipt, we find him continuing to contemplate the West Indies as his most likely destiny, although disposed to stay at home if possible. Indeed it can scarcely be doubted that, but for the accidental delay of the vessel in which his passage was taken out, the Ayrshire poet would have been on his way

across the Atlantic long before any decided temptation arose to induce him to try his fortune in Edinburgh.[1]

It was on the day before Blacklock wrote his letter that the birth of his twin children was announced to the poet; and this event was not without its influence in shaping his career. He felt the claim of these infants upon his care, and desired to remain at home for their protection. At the same time, he beheld in his cruel fortunes, and felt in his late mortifications, powerful reasons for holding by his original plan. In these circumstances, his generous friends Aiken and Hamilton took some trouble to ascertain if there was not a chance of securing an appointment in the Excise, as a means of providing for him at home. But even of this change of fortune, if realised, he feared that he might not be able to take advantage. While thus in suspense, he took his usual share in the labours of the harvest, occasionally visited his friends at Ayr and elsewhere, and did not allow the Muse to remain uncultivated. When not engaged in company or in composition, the wells of bitter recollection would flow out, and steep his soul in wretchedness.

It seems to have been at the close of autumn that he composed his amusing poem, *The Brigs of Ayr*, the model of which he found in Fergusson's *Dialogue between the Plainstanes and Causeway*, though, as usual, he made an immense advance upon his predecessor. A new bridge was now building across the river at Ayr, in order to supersede an ancient structure which had long been inconvenient, and was now infirm, and as this work was proceeding under the chief magistracy of his kind patron, Mr Ballantyne,

[1] What is here presented regarding the connection of Burns with the minister of Loudon, is arranged, according to the best of the editor's judgment, from the statements of Professor Walker (*Life of Burns*), Gilbert Burns (*Currie*, vol. iii., Appendix), and manuscript notices supplied by Mr Lawrie's family, which have already been made use of in *The Land of Burns*. I must candidly apprise the reader that the materials are not self-consistent, and that I can only pretend, out of several difficulties, to have chosen what appeared to me the least. The date assigned by Walker for Burns's visit is the 'end of autumn;' but this neither comports with the date of Dr Blacklock's letter, afterwards received, nor with the accounts we have of Burns's intentions in other quarters. That degree of determination for the West Indies which alone could have prompted *The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast*, had certainly ceased before September was far advanced, though the plan was not wholly abandoned till October had expired. The song itself describes autumn objects and circumstances, though under an intrusion of wintry weather. Severe cold blasts are certainly not uncommon at any period of a Scottish autumn, but it did happen that there was a violent storm, accompanied by rain and lightning, in the west of Scotland on the two last days of August and first of September this year, being the time which we have in view for the incident.

Burns seized the occasion to make a return of gratitude by inscribing the poem to him :—

THE BRIGS OF AYR.

INSCRIBED TO JOHN BALLANTYNE, ESQ., AYR.

The simple Bard, rough at the rustic plough,
Learning his tuneful trade from every bough;
The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush,
Hailing the setting sun, sweet, in the green thorn-bush;
The soaring lark, the perching redbreast shrill,
Or deep-toned plovers, gray, wild-whistling o'er the hill;
Shall he, nurst in the peasant's lowly shed,
To hardy independence bravely bred,
By early poverty to hardship steeled,
And trained to arms in stern misfortune's field—
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,
The servile, mercenary Swiss of rhymes?
Or labour hard the panegyric close,
With all the venal soul of dedicating prose?
No! though his artless strains he rudely sings,
And throws his hand uncouthly o'er the strings,
He glows with all the spirit of the Bard,
Fame, honest Fame, his great, his dear reward!
Still, if some patron's generous care he trace,
Skilled in the secret to bestow with grace;
When Ballantyne befriends his humble name,
And hands the rustic stranger up to Fame,
With heartfelt throes his grateful bosom swells,
The godlike bliss, to give, alone excels.

'Twas when the stacks get on their winter hap, covering
And thack and rape secure the toil-won crap; thatch
Potato bings are snuggèd up frae skaith heaps—danger
Of coming Winter's biting, frosty breath;
The bees, rejoicing o'er their summer toils,
Unnumbered buds and flowers' delicious spoils,
Sealed up with frugal care in massive waxen piles,
Are doomed by man, that tyrant o'er the weak,
The death o' devils smoored wi' brimstone reek: smothered
The thundering guns are heard on every side,
The wounded coveys, reeling, scatter wide;
The feathered field-mates, bound by Nature's tie,
Sires, mothers, children, in one carnage lie:
(What warm, poetic heart, but inly bleeds,
And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds!)

Nae mair the flower in field or meadow springs;
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
Except, perhaps, the robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noontide blaze,
While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays.

'Twas in that season, when a simple Bard,
Unknown and poor, Simplicity's reward,
Ae night, within the ancient brugh of Ayr,
By whim inspired, or haply prest wi' care,
He left his bed, and took his wayward route,
And down by Simpson's[1] wheeled the left-about:
(Whether impelled by all-directing Fate,
To witness what I after shall narrate;[2]
Or whether, rapt in meditation high,
He wandered out he knew not where or why)
The drowsy Dungeon-clock[3] had numbered two,
And Wallace Tower[4] had sworn the fact was true:
The tide-swoln Firth, with sullen sounding roar,
Through the still night dashed hoarse along the shore.
All else was hushed as Nature's closed e'e:
The silent moon shone high o'er tower and tree:
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept, gently-crusting, o'er the glittering stream.
When lo! on either hand the listening Bard,
The clanging sugh of whistling wings is heard; rustle
Two dusky forms dart through the midnight air,
Swift as the gos[5] drives on the wheeling hare:

Ane on the Auld Brig his airy shape uprears,
The ither flutters o'er the rising piers:
Our warlock Rhymer instantly descried
The Sprites that owre the Brigs of Ayr preside.
(That Bards are second-sighted is nae joke,
And ken the lingo of the sp'ritual folk;

[1] A noted tavern at the Auld Brig end.—*B.*

[2] In a MS. copy, here occur two lines omitted in print:

> 'Or penitential pangs for former sins
> Led him to rove by quondam Merran Din's.'

[3] A clock in a steeple connected with the old jail of Ayr. This steeple and its clock were removed some years ago.

[4] The clock in the Wallace Tower—an anomalous piece of antique masonry, surmounted by a spire, which stood in the High Street of Ayr. It was removed some years ago, and replaced by a more elegant tower, which bears its name.

[5] The gos-hawk, or falcon.—*B.*

Fays, Spunkies, Kelpies, a', they can explain them,
And even the very deils they brawly ken them.) well know
Auld Brig appeared of ancient Pictish race,
The very wrinkles Gothic in his face:
He seemed as he wi' Time had warstl'd lang,
Yet, teughly doure, he bade an unco bang. obdurate—stroke
New Brig was buskit in a braw new coat,
That he at Lon'on, frae ane Adams, got;
In 's hand five taper staves as smooth 's a bead,
Wi' virls and whirlygigums at the head.
The Goth was stalking round with anxious search,
Spying the time-worn flaws in every arch;
It chanced his new-come neebor took his e'e,
And e'en a vexed and angry heart had he!
Wi' thieveless sneer to see his modish mien, spited
He, down the water, gies him this guid-e'en:—

AULD BRIG.

I doubt na, frien', ye 'll think ye 're nae sheepshank,[1]
Ance ye were streekit o'er frae bank to bank, stretched
But gin ye be a brig as auld as me—
Though, faith, that day I doubt ye 'll never see;
There 'll be, if that date come, I 'll wad a boddle, bet a doit
Some fewer whigmaleeries in your noddle.

NEW BRIG.

Auld Vandal, ye but shew your little mense, civility
Just much about it wi' your scanty sense;
Will your poor, narrow footpath of a street—
Whare twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet—
Your ruined, formless bulk o' stane and lime,
Compare wi' bonny Brigs o' modern time?
There 's men o' taste would tak the Ducat Stream,[2]
Though they should cast the very sark and swim,
Ere they would grate their feelings wi' the view
Of sic an ugly Gothic hulk as you.

AULD BRIG.

Conceited gowk, puffed up wi' windy pride! fool
This monie a year I 've stood the flood and tide;
And though wi' crazy eild I 'm sair forfairn, age—enfeebled
I 'll be a Brig when ye 're a shapeless cairn!
As yet ye little ken about the matter,
But twa-three winters will inform ye better.

[1] No contemptible or worthless thing.

[2] A noted ford just above the Auld Brig.—*B.*

When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boil,
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course,
Or haunted Garpal[1] draws his feeble source,
Aroused by blustering winds and spotting thowes,
In monie a torrent down his snaw-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat, flood
Sweeps dams, and mills, and brigs a' to the gate; way
And from Glenbuck[2] down to the Ratton-key[3]
Auld Ayr is just one lengthened tumbling sea—
Then down ye'll hurl, deil nor ye never rise!
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies. muddy waves
A lesson sadly teaching, to your cost,
That Architecture's noble art is lost!

NEW BRIG.

Fine Architecture, trowth, I needs must say 't o't!
The L— be thankit that we 've tint the gate o't! lost
Gaunt, ghastly, ghaist-alluring edifices,
Hanging with threatening jut, like precipices;
O'erarching, mouldy, gloom-inspiring coves,
Supporting roofs fantastic, stony groves:
Windows, and doors in nameless sculpture drest,
With order, symmetry, or taste unblest;
Forms like some bedlam statuary's dream,
The crazed creations of misguided whim;
Forms might be worshipped on the bended knee,
And still the second dread command be free,
Their likeness is not found on earth, in air, or sea.
Mansions that would disgrace the building taste
Of any mason reptile, bird or beast;
Fit only for a doited monkish race, doting
Or frosty maids forsworn the dear embrace;
Or cuifs of latter times, wha held the notion fools
That sullen gloom was sterling true devotion;
Fancies that our good Brugh denies protection![4]
And soon may they expire, unblest with resurrection!

AULD BRIG.

Oh ye, my dear remembered ancient yealings, coevals
Were ye but here to share my wounded feelings!

[1] The banks of Garpal Water is one of the few places in the west of Scotland where those fancy-scaring beings, known by the name of ghaists, still continue pertinaciously to inhabit.—*B.*

[2] The source of the river Ayr.—*B.*

[3] A small landing-place above the large key.—*B.*

[4] An allusion to the moderatism of the Ayr clergy.

Ye worthy Provosts, and monie a Bailie,
Wha in the paths o' righteousness did toil aye;
Ye dainty Deacons and ye douce Conveeners,
To whom our moderns are but causey-cleaners;
Ye godly Councils wha hae blest this town;
Ye godly brethren o' the sacred gown,
Wha meekly gae your hurdies to the smiters;
And (what would now be strange)[1] ye godly writers;
A' ye douce folk I've borne aboon the broo, water
Were ye but here, what would ye say or do!
How would your spirits groan in deep vexation,
To see each melancholy alteration;
And agonising, curse the time and place
When ye begat the base degenerate race!
Nae langer reverend men, their country's glory,
In plain braid Scots hold forth a plain braid story!
Nae langer thrifty citizens and douce,
Meet owre a pint, or in the council-house;
But staumrel, corky-headed, graceless gentry, half-witted
The herryment and ruin of the country;
Men three parts made by tailors and by barbers,
Wha waste your weel-hained gear on d—— new Brigs and Harbours!

NEW BRIG.

Now haud you there, for faith you 've said enough,
And muckle mair than ye can mak to through;[2] make good
As for your Priesthood I shall say but little,
Corbies and Clergy are a shot right kittle:
But, under favour o' your langer beard,
Abuse o' magistrates might weel be spared:
To liken them to your auld-warld squad,
I must needs say comparisons are odd.
In Ayr, wag-wits nae mair can hae a handle
To mouth 'a citizen,' a term o' scandal;
Nae mair the Council waddles down the street,
In all the pomp of ignorant conceit;[3]
Men wha grew wise priggin' owre hops and raisins,
Or gathered liberal views in bonds and seisins,

[1] A sly hint at the easy professions of the Ayr *writers* or lawyers now known to Burns.

[2] Inserted in MS. copy:

'That's aye a string auld doited Graybeards harp on,
A topic for their peevishness to carp on.'

[3] Variation in MS.:

'Nae mair down street the Council quorum waddles,
With wigs like mainsails on their logger noddles;
No difference but bulkiest or tallest,
With comfortable dulness in for ballast:
Nor shoals nor currents need a pilot's caution,
For regularly slow, they only witness motion.'

If haply Knowledge, on a random tramp,
Had shored them with a glimmer of his lamp, offered
And would to Common-sense for once betrayed them,
Plain, dull Stupidity stept kindly in to aid them.

What further clish-ma-claver might been said, palaver
What bloody wars, if Sprites had blood to shed,
No man can tell; but all before their sight,
A fairy train appeared in order bright;
Adown the glittering stream they featly danced;
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanced:
They footed o'er the watery glass so neat,
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet:
While arts of minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul-ennobling bards heroic ditties sung.
Oh had M'Lachlan,[1] thairm-inspiring sage, cat-gut
Been there to hear this heavenly band engage,
When through his dear strathspeys they bore with Highland rage;
Or when they struck old Scotia's melting airs,
The lover's raptured joys or bleeding cares;
How would his Highland lug been nobler fired, ear
And even his matchless hand with finer touch inspired!
No guess could tell what instrument appeared,
But all the soul of Music's self was heard;
Harmonious concert rung in every part,
While simple melody poured moving on the heart.

The Genius of the stream in front appears,
A venerable chief advanced in years;
His hoary head with water-lilies crowned,
His manly leg with garter tangle bound.
Next came the loveliest pair in all the ring,
Sweet Female Beauty hand in hand with Spring;
Then, crowned with flowery hay, came Rural Joy,
And Summer, with his fervid-beaming eye:
All-cheering Plenty, with her flowing horn,
Led yellow Autumn, wreathed with nodding corn;

[1] A well-known performer of Scottish music on the violin.—*B.* James M'Lachlan, a Highlander, had been once footman to Lord John Campbell at Inverary. He came to Ayrshire in a fencible regiment, and was patronised by Hugh Montgomery of Coilsfield (afterwards Earl of Eglintoune), who was himself both a player and a composer. Matthew Hall, who was lately living in extreme old age at Newton-upon-Ayr, used to accompany M'Lachlan over a wide extent of country, for the purpose of playing at gentlemen's houses, and even in Edinburgh and Glasgow on great occasions. In one week, to use Hall's words, they have passed twenty-six parish kirks, and returned to Ayr on Friday to a ball, never getting to bed till Saturday night.—*Ballads and Songs of Ayrshire.*

Then Winter's time-bleached locks did hoary shew,
By Hospitality with cloudless brow.
Next followed Courage, with his martial stride,
From where the Feal wild woody coverts hide;[1]
Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
A female form, came from the towers of Stair:[2]
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode
From simple Catrine, their long-loved abode:[3]
Last, white-robed Peace, crowned with a hazel wreath,
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
The broken iron instruments of death;
At sight of whom our Sprites forgat their kindling wrath.

All through this summer, while he was in his local, social, and domestic character a wretched and unfortunate man, while yet that was preparing by which he was to be ultimately raised to the pinnacle of literary glory, the singular episode of Highland Mary remained unaccomplished. Yet, notwithstanding rueings of affection about Jean, and poetical gallantries towards the Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle, and perhaps others, his mind must have been all the time charged in its deeper and more mystic recesses with the idea of the simple girl, who, after pledging her love to him in his hour of bitter humiliation, had gone to see her friends in the West Highlands, preparatory to their contemplated union. Burns makes no reference to this affair in his letters or poems; he observed entire silence about it in the Mossgiel household. There is therefore such a want of direct evidence on the subject, that we might almost justifiably set it out of sight, if there were not overpowering circumstantial proof that it was an affair actually going on at this time. The circumstances are here presented in the best arrangement which the case admits of.

Mary, we are to presume from the narration of the poet, had proceeded, immediately after their parting, to Campbelton, where her parents then resided. She had spent the summer there; but there is no evidence that she had taken any steps in arranging matters for a union with Burns, although it is believed that she received letters from him. After having spent the summer at home, she agreed, at the recommendation of her former patroness, Mrs Isabella Campbell, to accept a new situation for the term

[1] We have here a compliment to Montgomery of Coilsfield—Soger Hugh—alluded to in the preceding note. Coilsfield is situated on the Feal, or Faile, a tributary of the Ayr.

[2] A compliment to his early patroness, Mrs Stewart of Stair. See notes to *Epistle to Davie.*

[3] A compliment to Professor Dugald Stewart.

beginning at Martinmas, in the family of a Colonel M'Ivor in Glasgow.

A cousin of Mary's mother was the wife of one Peter Macpherson, a ship-carpenter at Greenock. It being determined that her younger brother Robert should be entered with Macpherson as an apprentice, her father came to Greenock to make the proper arrangements, and Mary accompanied him, professedly on her way to Glasgow for the purpose of entering on her service with Colonel M'Ivor, but secretly perhaps with the further design of taking a final farewell of Burns when he should depart for the West Indies; for Burns has expressly said that she crossed the sea [the Firth of Clyde] to meet him. There was what is called a *brothering-feast* at Macpherson's, on Robert Campbell being admitted to the craft, and Mary gave her assistance in serving the company. Next morning, the boy Robert was so indisposed as to be unable to go to his work. When Macpherson came home to breakfast, he asked what had detained him from the yard, and was told that the young man was very poorly. Mary jocularly observed that he had probably taken a little too much after supper last night, and Macpherson, to keep up the badinage, said: 'Oh, then, it is as well, in case of the worst, that I have agreed to purchase that *lair* in the kirk-yard;' referring to a place of sepulture which he had just secured for his family—a very important matter in Greenock, as there was then no resting-place for the remains of those who did not possess such property, except the corner assigned to strangers and paupers, or a grave obtained by favour from a friend.

The young man's illness proved more serious than was at first supposed, and Mary attended him with great tenderness and assiduity. In a few days Robert began to recover, but at the same time Mary drooped, and became seriously unwell. Her friends believed that she suffered from the cast of an evil eye, and recommended her father to go to a cross burn—that is, a place where two burns meet—and select seven smooth stones from the channel, boil them with new milk for a certain time, and then give her the milk to drink. It must be remembered that these were Highland people, and that the Highlanders are to this day full of superstitious notions. The drink was duly prepared, as had been recommended, and given to Mary; but her illness was soon declared to be fever, of a malignant species, then prevalent in the town, and in a few days the poor girl died. She was buried in the *lair* which her relative had so recently bought, being the first of the family who was placed in it.

Such are the particulars derived from Macpherson's daughter, and from a male relative of the family[1] who has often conversed on the subject with Mary's mother. There seems to be no good reason for doubting them, or any of them. The only point in which the story is defective is the date, a matter regarding which the memory is apt to be less faithful than with respect to events. There is, unluckily, no register of deaths or funerals for this period in Greenock. On a visit to the town for the purpose of making investigations, the first attention of the editor was given to Mary's grave. It is in the burial-ground of the West Church, the original and principal parish of Greenock—a melancholy and half-deserted precinct, so close to the Firth of Clyde, that a stone could be thrown into it from the passing steamers. In a central situation are two flat stones, recording the ancestors of the illustrious James Watt. Near the west end is the little plot which had belonged to Peter Macpherson, the ship-carpenter. Shading it from the setting sun is a tall elegant structure, which a few admirers of Burns have erected for the commemoration of her whom the poet loved. It contains a sculpture representing the parting of the lovers, surmounted by a figure weeping over an urn, on which is inscribed the name Mary. At the foot of this lofty structure nestles the original little *head-stone* of Macpherson. In its semi-lunar upper compartment are carved the tools of a carpenter, with the date 1760. Underneath, on the square body of the stone, is the legend: 'This Burying-place belongs to Peter Macpherson, ship-carpenter in Greenock, and Mary Campbell his spouse, and their children, 1787.' There was an uncertainty here. The stone might have been erected in 1760 by some member of Macpherson's family, from whom he had inherited it; and notwithstanding the legend and second date, Mary might have been buried there at any time from 1760 downward. It is, however, observable that the legend and second date are inscribed upon a surface half an inch or so *inward* from that on which the tools are carved, as if an earlier inscription had been obliterated—implying that the stone had undergone a renovation in 1787. If that was to be regarded as a doing of Macpherson when he became possessed of the *lair*, the tendency of the evidence might be said to be in favour of a late, rather than an early date for the death of Mary. Still, the matter was left at an unsatisfactory point.

At this stage of the inquiry it was brought to mind that there

[1] Mr J. C. Douglas, clothier, Greenock.

was a Register of Lairs, in which it might be hoped that the date of Macpherson's purchase was entered. A wretched tattered old volume was found buried in a mass of similar rubbish in the possession of Mr Teulon, superintendent of the burying-grounds of Greenock, by whose obliging assistance, with no small difficulty, an entry was at length found, to the following effect:—

		feet			
'1760.					
'Jany. 14.	Duncan Robertson, carpenter,	6	£0	9	0
'1786.					
'Oct. 12.	This lair is this day transferred to Peter Macpherson, ship-carpenter in Greenock.'				

There could not of course remain the slightest doubt that the ground which contains the ashes of Highland Mary was bought by her relative at the very time when Robert Burns designed to sail from Greenock for the West Indies. Macpherson had, as conjectured, succeeded to a stone, which he had renovated, preserving only the sculpture of his predecessor's emblems of trade, because these were equally suitable for himself. Unless, then, we are to reject the family story entirely, and suppose it possible that Mary was buried here while Duncan Robertson possessed the ground, which the customs of sepulture in Greenock render to the last degree improbable, we must admit that her death took place in the latter part of 1786—consequently after her poet-lover had broken off his match with Jean Armour—in short, the piteous tale of the Highland Lassie comes in as one of several episodes that checkered the main attachment of Burns's life, that which terminated in making him at length a husband.

Mary's parents and other near relations, who afterwards settled in Greenock, were of such a grade of mind and strain of sentiment as to shrink for many years from all acknowledgment of Burns as her lover. It cannot be surprising that a man who could think of administering a decoction of pebbles as a cure for his daughter's illness, was narrow-spirited enough to burn the letters of a great poet, and forbid his name to be mentioned in the family. The mother, who was a good, kind-hearted creature, was more relenting. She learned to sing the song of the Highland Lassie to her grandchildren. On being asked by her grand-nephew, Mr J. C. Douglas, if she thought that Mary would have married Burns, she said that she could not tell what might have happened if Mary had survived, but she did not think her sweet lassie could have ever been happy with so wild and profane a genius as Burns—yet she would immediately add, that he was 'a real warm-hearted chield,' for

such was the impression he had made upon her when he had subsequently paid her a visit. The old woman always spoke of Mary, who was the eldest of her eight children, as a paragon of gentleness and amiability. Her sincerity was a quality which, above all others, the mother fondly dwelt on. There is, indeed, all desirable reason to believe that Mary was of a character to have graced, if not even rectified, a companion-spirit such as Burns—who, in subsequent years, might well have imagined that with her he could have been something different from what he was.

> 'What conquest o'er each erring thought
> Of that fierce realm had Agnes wrought!
> I had not wandered wild and wide,
> With such an angel for my guide;
> Nor heaven nor earth could then reprove me
> If she had lived, and lived to love me.'

We must now revert to Mossgiel, where the poet was living in an unsettled state, looking forward to the Jamaica voyage, but still hopeful that a ram would be caught in the thicket—that is, an Excise situation prove attainable—so as to save him from exile. Mrs Begg remembers, that after the work of the season was over, and she had, as usual, taken to the *big wheel*, in which either her mother or one of her sisters was assisting her—Robert and Gilbert being also present—a letter for the former was handed in. He went to the window to open and read it, and she was struck by the look of agony which was the consequence. He went out without uttering a syllable. The family learned nothing of the facts of the case till after the publication of some of the songs written upon Mary; and even then they became aware of this strange passage in their brother's history only as something too sacred for discussion or remark.

Burns's reasons for maintaining a mystery on the subject can only be matter of conjecture. He might have some sense of remorse about this simple girl—he might feel some little shame on account of her humble position in life—he might dread the world's knowing that, after the affair of Jean Armour, in the midst of such calamitous circumstances, and facing a long exile in the West Indies, he had been so madly imprudent as to engage a poor girl to join him in wedlock, whether to go with him, or to wait for his return. Some remarks of Dr Currie, in which this affair is touched upon, and which significantly occur immediately after the recital of the rencontre with the Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle, are here worthy of attention, as helping to verify a

narration otherwise apt to appear a modern myth:—'The sensibility,' says he, 'of our bard's temper, and the force of his imagination, exposed him in a particular manner to the impressions of beauty; and these qualities, united to his impassioned eloquence, gave him in turn a powerful influence over the female heart. The banks of the Ayr formed the scene of youthful passions of a still tenderer nature, *the history of which it would be improper to reveal, were it even in our power; and the traces of which will soon be discoverable only in those strains of nature and sensibility to which they gave birth.* The song entitled *Highland Mary* is known to relate to one of these attachments. "It was written," says our bard, "on one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days." The object of this passion died early in life, and the impression left on the mind of Burns seems to have been deep and lasting.' It seems not unlikely that Currie had got a hint of the affair from Gilbert Burns, but with injunctions to touch on it lightly.[1]

The letter which follows, though undated, is evidently of this period. It throws a valuable light on the inner feelings of Burns at a time when he appeared to the common minds around him as only a reckless son of song. May we not reasonably suspect that some of the 'wandering stabs of remorse' to which he alludes bore reference to Highland Mary?—

TO MR ROBERT AIKEN.

[*A little after Oct.* 6 ?]

SIR—I was with Wilson my printer t'other day, and settled all our bygone matters between us. After I had paid all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of the first and readiest, which he declines. By his account, the paper of 1000 copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and

[1] Mr John Kerr of Glasgow, in a communication to the *Scots Times* in 1827, expresses his regret that none of the letters of Burns to Highland Mary are now in existence. 'After Mary's death,' he says, 'her father disliked all allusions to her or to her lover; and when Burns wrote a moving letter, requesting some memorial of her he loved so dearly, the stern old man neither answered it, nor allowed any one to speak about it in his presence.' The Bible in two volumes, presented by Burns to Mary, remained in possession of the mother for many years, and was given by her to her only surviving daughter, Mrs Anderson. From Mrs Anderson it came to her son, William Anderson, mason in Renton, Dumbartonshire. He emigrated to Canada, carried the Bible with him, and it was there purchased by a party of gentlemen for £25, and forwarded to the provost of Ayr, to be presented in their name to the trustees of Burns's monument. This was accordingly done on the 25th of January 1841, being the poet's birthday. On the next anniversary of the poet's birth, January 25, 1842, a handsome monument, which had cost about £100, raised by subscription, was consecrated to the memory of Highland Mary, on the spot of her sepulture in the West Kirk-yard of Greenock.

the printing about fifteen or sixteen: he offers to agree to this for the printing if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition till I grow richer! an epocha which I think will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely anything hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to shew my gratitude to Mr Ballantyne, by publishing my poem of *The Brigs of Ayr*. I would detest myself as a wretch if I thought I were capable in a very long life of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations; but I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection, but sheerly the instinctive emotion of my heart, too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within respecting the Excise. There are many things plead strongly against it: the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and, besides, I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society or the vagaries of the Muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances everything that can be laid in the scale against it.

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul; though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet I think I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence; if so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? Oh thou great unknown Power!—thou Almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality!—I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power in that way to reap the

fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages, is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail further misery——

To tell the truth, I have little reason for complaint, as the world, in general, has been kind to me fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining, distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the by, was rather more than I could well boast), still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be done. When all my school-fellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted, who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the 'hallachores' of the human race) were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I 'was standing idle in the market-place,' or only left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim.

You see, sir, that if to know one's errors were a probability of mending them, I stand a fair chance; but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it. R. B.

It thus appears that, while the country was ringing with his applause, the Ayrshire Ploughman, by which name he had already become distinguished, pined in secret wretchedness, to which there was no relief but in gay society, and in the excitement which he always felt while composing poetry. He was not yet relieved from the doom of banishment; the recollection of the late humiliating circumstances connected with his Jean pressed sore upon him: he saw himself in his place and circle fully as much a subject of vulgar obloquy as of admiration or affection. Under the immediate influence of circumstances so calculated to harass and depress the spirit, even those surgings of an ultra-provincial acclaim which were beginning to reach him, dear as they must have been to a poet's bosom, could have little more effect than 'the bare imagination of the summer's heat' is fitted to have on him who 'thrills in regions of thick-ribbed ice.' Little could the refined people who were with wonder and delight perusing the Kilmarnock volume, imagine what a complication of tragic fact and emotion its obscure author had contrived to wind around him.

But who is there that has not looked inward with surprise on

the variety of feelings which will pass through his bosom even at the most painful crises of existence? It certainly is not in human nature to concentrate the whole power of feeling for any length of time on one subject; while it is equally true that a great grief can be postponed—can be taken out, like a miniature from a cabinet, and gloated over at convenient times, and thus receive that full measure of entertainment which contents the conscience; although in the intervals the demands of business, the duties of society, and the homely needs of nature, be duly and even cheerfully attended to. It will be found hereafter that there is great reason for believing that the 20th of October was the date of the death of Highland Mary. We do not absolutely know that Burns was immediately apprised of the event; but whether he knew of it before the end of the month or not, it ought not perhaps to excite much surprise that, within that space, he was capable of writing in mirthful terms to those who had no occasion to know of there being any such subject of sad reflection in his mind.

Professor Dugald Stewart, the elegant expositor of the Scottish system of metaphysics, resided at this time in a villa at Catrine, on the Ayr, a few miles from the bard's farm. He had been made acquainted with the extraordinary productions of Burns by Mr Mackenzie, the clever, liberal-minded surgeon of Mauchline. At the request of the professor, Mackenzie came to dinner at Catrine, accompanied by the poet. We learn from infallible testimony that this was on the 23d of October, only three days after that assumed as the probable date of the death of Mary Campbell. Burns was sufficiently embarrassed at the idea of meeting in the flesh a distinguished member of the literary circle of Edinburgh; but, to increase the feeling, there chanced also to be present a young scion of nobility—Lord Daer, son of the Earl of Selkirk—a positively alarming idea to the rustic bard, who had as yet seen nobility no nearer than on the Ayr race-course, or whirling along the road in carriages. Lord Daer, who had been a pupil of Professor Stewart, had called, it appears, by chance. Of the meeting, Burns and Stewart have left their respective records:—

LINES ON MEETING WITH BASIL, LORD DAER.

This wot ye all whom it concerns,
I, Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,
October twenty-third,
A ne'er-to-be-forgotten day,
Sae far I sprachled up the brae, clambered
I dinner'd wi' a Lord.

I 've been at drucken writers' feasts,
Nay, been bitch-fou 'mang godly priests,
Wi' reverence be it spoken;
I 've even joined the honoured jorum,
When mighty squireships of the quorum
Their hydra drouth did sloken.

But wi' a Lord!—stand out my shin,
A Lord—a Peer—an Earl's son!
Up higher yet my bonnet!
And sic a Lord!—lang Scotch ells twa,
Our Peerage he o'erlooks them a',
As I look o'er my sonnet.

But oh for Hogarth's magic power!
To shew Sir Bardie's willyart glower, bewildered
And how he stared and stammer'd,
When goavan, as if led wi' branks, moving stupidly
And stumpin' on his ploughman shanks,
He in the parlour hammer'd.

I sidling sheltered in a nook,
And at his Lordship steal't a look,
Like some portentous omen;
Except good sense and social glee,
And (what surprised me) modesty,
I markèd nought uncommon.

I watched the symptoms o' the great,
The gentle pride, the lordly state,
The arrogant assuming;
The fient a pride, nae pride had he,
Nor sauce, nor state, that I could see,
Mair than an honest ploughman.

Then from his lordship I shall learn
Henceforth to meet with unconcern
One rank as weel 's anither;
Nae honest worthy man need care
To meet with noble youthful Daer,
For he but meets a brother.[1]

The professor, after some details about the visit, says: 'His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple,

[1] Lord Daer was a young nobleman of the greatest promise. He had just returned from France, where he cultivated the society of some of those men who afterwards figured in the Revolution (particularly Condorcet), and had contracted their sentiments. He was cut off in November 1794, leaving the succession open to his younger brother, the late Thomas, Earl of Selkirk, distinguished by his exertions in the cause of emigration.

manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing perhaps was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.'

TO DR MACKENZIE, MAUCHLINE.

ENCLOSING HIM VERSES ON DINING WITH LORD DAER.

Wednesday Morning [*October 25?*]

DEAR SIR—I never spent an afternoon among great folks with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honour of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man the professor [Dugald Stewart]. I would be delighted to see him perform acts of kindness and friendship, though I were not the object; he does it with such a grace. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus—four parts Socrates, four parts Nathaniel, and two parts Shakspeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore, but a little corrected since. They may entertain you a little, with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as to favour the performances of, dear sir, your very humble servant, R. B.

In the course of his visits to Ayr, Burns had formed an acquaintance with Major William Logan, a retired military officer, noted for his wit, his violin-playing, and his convivial habits, who lived a cheerful bachelor-life with his mother and an unmarried sister. Burns had visited Logan at his villa of Park, near Ayr, had enjoyed his fiddle and his waggery, and run over—so to speak—the whole gamut of his congenial heart.[1] He had also been much

[1] The major was rather too convivial, and many were the jokes he made about his own habits. Asked one day by an Ayr hostess if he would have water to the glass of spirits she

pleased with the manners of the old lady and her daughter. On the 30th of October, he is found addressing the major in an epistle expressed in merry but careless verse:—

EPISTLE TO MAJOR LOGAN.

Hail, thairm-inspirin', rattlin' Willie! — fiddle-string
Though Fortune's road be rough and hilly
To every fiddling, rhyming billie,
We never heed,
But take it like the unbacked filly,
Proud o' her speed.

When idly goavan whyles we saunter, — moving stupidly
Yirr, fancy barks, awa' we canter
Uphill, down brae, till some mischanter, — accident
Some black bog-hole,
Arrests us, then the scaith and banter
We 're forced to thole. — bear

Hale be your heart!—hale be your fiddle!
Lang may your elbock jink and diddle,
To cheer you through the weary widdle
O' this wild warl',
Until you on a crummock driddle — staff
A gray-haired carle.

Come wealth, come poortith, late or soon,
Heaven send your heart-strings aye in tune,
And screw your temper-pins aboon
A fifth or mair,
The melancholious, lazy croon,
O' cankrie care.

brought to him, he said, with a knowing grin: 'No; I would rather ye took the water out o't.' One of his remarks was: 'It is said that persons who eat much die of apoplexy; it is also said that persons who drink much die of apoplexy. My case is different, for I both eat much and drink much: therefore, I shall not die of apoplexy.' He used to talk with high relish of the days when he was a prisoner in America: 'Plenty to eat and drink, and no parades.' One of his puns was so felicitous, that Thomas Hood himself might have envied it. A young officer was talking freely on religious subjects in the company of the major. He wound up with: 'In fact, I look upon the Deity merely as my superior, and myself as his vassal.' 'Yes,' quoth Logan, 'ye may well say that, for I have no doubt you pay him *feu-duties*'—*quasi dicitur*, few duties.* The poor wit, overgrown with the effects of over-indulgence, was at length the victim of painful ailments. The Rev. Mr Cuthill, one of the Ayr ministers, called to see him, and remarked that it would require fortitude to bear up under such sufferings. 'Ay,' said the dying major, 'it would take *fifitude*.'

* *Feu-duties* are in Scotland equivalent to ground-rent in England.

May still your life from day to day
Nae 'lente largo' in the play,
But 'allegretto forte' gay
Harmonious flow
A sweeping, kindling, bauld Strathspey—
Encore! Bravo!

A blessing on the cheery gang
Wha dearly like a jig or sang,
And never think o' right and wrang
By square and rule,
But as the clegs o' feeling stang, gadflies
Are wise or fool.

My hand-waled curse keep hard in chase chosen
The harpy, hoodock, purse-proud race, miserly
Wha count on poortith as disgrace—
Their tuneless hearts!
May fireside discords jar a base
To a' their parts!

But come, your hand, my careless brither,
I' th' ither warl', if there's anither—
And that there is I've little swither doubt
About the matter—
We cheek for chow shall jog thegither; jole
I'se ne'er bid better. expect

We've faults and failings—granted clearly,
We're frail backsliding mortals merely,
Eve's bonny squad priests wyte them sheerly blame
For our grand fa';
But still, but still—I like them dearly—
God bless them a'!

Ochon for poor Castalian drinkers,
When they fa' foul o' earthly jinkers,
The witching cursed delicious blinkers
Hae put me hyte, mad
And gart me weet my waukrife winkers made—sleepless
Wi' girnin' spite.

But by yon moon!—and that's high swearin'—
And every star within my hearin'!
And by her een wha was a dear ane!
I'll ne'er forget;
I hope to gie the jads a clearin'
In fair-play yet.

My loss I mourn, but not repent it,
I 'll seek my pursie whare I tint it,
Ance to the Indies I were wonted,
Some cantrip hour, witching
By some sweet elf I 'll yet be dinted,
Then, *vive l'amour!*

Faites mes baise-mains respectueuses,
To sentimental sister Susie,
And honest Lucky; no to roose you,
Ye may be proud,
That sic a couple Fate allows ye
To grace your blood.

Nae mair at present can I measure,
And trowth, my rhymin' ware 's nae treasure;
But when in Ayr, some half-hour's leisure,
Be 't light, be 't dark,
Sir Bard will do himself the pleasure
To call at Park.

R. B.

MOSSGIEL, *30th October* 1786.

'But of all the friendships,' says Gilbert, 'which Robert acquired in Ayrshire and elsewhere, none seemed more agreeable to him than that of Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, nor any which has been more uniformly and constantly exerted in behalf of him and his family, of which, were it proper, I could give many instances. Robert was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs Dunlop had heard of him. About the time of my brother's publishing in Kilmarnock, she had been afflicted with a long and severe illness, which had reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression. In this situation, a copy of the printed Poems was laid on her table by a friend; and happening to open on *The Cotter's Saturday Night,* she read it over with the greatest pleasure and surprise; the poet's description of the simple cottagers operating on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, expelling the demon *ennui,* and restoring her to her wonted inward harmony and satisfaction. Mrs Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossgiel, distant fifteen or sixteen miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half-a-dozen copies of his Poems, if he had them to spare, and begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop House as soon as convenient. This was the beginning of a correspondence which ended only with the poet's

life. [Nearly] the last use he made of his pen was writing a short letter to this lady a few days before his death.' It may be added, by way of explanation, that Mrs Dunlop, as daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, was regarded as a descendant of the celebrated Scottish patriot, though, in reality, her ancestor was only his brother.

TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

MADAM—I am truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honoured with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the sons of Parnassus: nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges honour him with their approbation. Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly than by noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor, the saviour of his country.

'Great patriot hero! ill-requited chief!'

The first book I met with in my early years which I perused with pleasure was *The Life of Hannibal;* the next was, *The History of Sir William Wallace;* for several of my earlier years I had few other authors, and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious but unfortunate stories. In those boyish days I remember in particular being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur:—

'Syne to the Leglen Wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.'

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half-a-dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen Wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymer) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.

R. B.

There is reason to believe, that early in November Burns paid a second visit to St Margaret's Hill, probably with the design of

consulting Mr Lawrie about his future movements. In the course of conversation, allusion was made to the story of Miss Peggy K——, which was then beginning to make a noise in Ayrshire. It will be remembered that Burns had some time before formed the acquaintance of this hapless daughter of beauty, and written a song in her praise. It was now feared by many that she had qualified herself for a worse than doubtful position in society. Contrary to what might have been expected of Burns, he took the least favourable view of the case of Young Peggy. Mrs Lawrie, who had a great horror for talk of this kind, said something sharp to Burns with reference to his remarks, and this sank into his sensitive mind. Before taking his leave, he had promised to send Ossian, and a collection of songs, for the perusal of the young people. He did so, accompanying the parcel with the following letter :—

TO MR ARCHIBALD LAWRIE.

MOSSGIEL, *November* 13, 1786.

DEAR SIR—I have along with this sent two volumes of Ossian, with the remaining volume of the songs. Ossian I am not in such a hurry about; but I wish the songs, with the volume of the Scotch poets, as soon as they can conveniently be despatched. If they are left at Mr Wilson the bookseller's shop in Kilmarnock, they will easily reach me.

My most respectful compliments to Mr and Mrs Lawrie; and a poet's warmest wishes for their happiness to the young ladies, particularly the fair musician, whom I think much better qualified than ever David was, or could be, to charm an evil spirit out of Saul.

Indeed it needs not the feelings of a poet to be interested in the welfare of one of the sweetest scenes of domestic peace and kindred love that ever I saw; as I think the peaceful unity of St Margaret's Hill can only be excelled by the harmonious concord of the Apocalyptic Zion. R. B.

When the books were opened, a slip of paper dropped out from between the leaves of one of the volumes, containing the following modest expostulation on the rebuke which had been administered by Mrs Lawrie :—

Rusticity's ungainly form
  May cloud the highest mind;
But when the heart is nobly warm,
  The good excuse will find.

Propriety's cold cautious rules
  Warm Fervour may o'erlook;
But spare poor Sensibility
  The ungentle, harsh rebuke.[1]

It would appear that the bard had lent the songs without duly considering his own pressing need for them, as, two days later, he desired Connel the carrier to call at St Margaret's Hill with the following characteristic note:—

MONSR. MONSR. ARCHIBALD LAWRIE.

COLLINE DE ST MARGARETE.

MAUCHLINE, 15th November 1786.

DEAR SIR—If convenient, please return me by Connel, the bearer, the two volumes of songs I left last time I was at St Margaret's Hill.

My best compliments to all the good family.

A Dieu je vous commende. ROBT. BURNS.

By this time Burns must have been aware of a circumstance most remarkable in such a career as his—the first mention of his name in a respectable organ of criticism. At that time the venerable *Scots Magazine* had a youthful rival in the *Edinburgh Magazine* of James Sibbald, a bookseller of literary taste, who seems to have been supported by many of the wits most interested in national antiquities and national poetry. The number of this work for October, published, as was then the custom, at the beginning of the month following that for which it was designated, contains a critique on *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns, Kilmarnock.*[2] The article is not ill written, nor does it plead for approbation to the poet on low grounds. It speaks of him as 'a striking example of native genius bursting through the obscurity of poverty and the obstructions of a laborious life.' 'To those,' the critic goes on to say, 'who admire the creations of untutored fancy, and are blind to many faults for the sake of numberless beauties, his poems will yield singular gratification. His observations on human character are acute and sagacious,

[1] The letter to Mr A. Lawrie and this, as well as a former scrap of verse respecting St Margaret's Hill, were first published in the *Land of Burns*, where a portrait of the Rev. George Lawrie is presented.

[2] In the *Edinburgh Advertiser* of November 3, the *Edinburgh Magazine for October* is advertised as 'published this day,' with the following addition to the usual description of the contents: 'In this number are given ample extracts from the Poems of R. BURNS, a ploughman in Ayrshire.'

and his descriptions are lively and just. Of rustic pleasantry he has a rich fund, and some of his softer scenes are touched with inimitable delicacy. . . . . The character Horace gives to Osellus is particularly applicable to him—

"Rusticus abnormis sapiens, crassaque Minerva."'

Copious extracts are added in justification of the critic's opinion. A copy of this panegyric from what Burns would deem a 'high quarter,' could scarcely fail to reach him ere November was far elapsed.

The precise time of his abandoning the resolution to go to the West Indies, and determining to remain to try his fortune in Edinburgh, cannot be ascertained. It does not appear to have been before the date of his *Epistle to Major Logan*—30th October. It was, however, before the 18th of November, when he told Mr Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, in a brief note, that he had now resolved to proceed to Edinburgh on Monday or Tuesday seven-night (the 27th or 28th). Mr Ballantyne of Ayr appears to have been concerned in the forming of this resolution. According to the report of Gilbert Burns, when it came to Mr Ballantyne's knowledge that the poet was prevented from printing a second edition by want of money to pay for the paper, he 'generously offered to accommodate Robert with what money he might need for that purpose [£27], but advised him to go to Edinburgh, as the fittest place for publishing.' It was very natural for the poet, in a brief account of his early career, to huddle up all the considerations and debatings on this subject, extending over a couple of months, in the abrupt reference to the effect of Dr Blacklock's letter; but it is the duty of the biographer to do his best to develop the matter at proper length, and with a just regard, in particular, to the kindness shewn to Burns by the gentlemen of his own district, before the capital had put any stamp upon him. The true extent of that kindness has, perhaps, never yet been fully appreciated.

It was at this crisis, and with a view to the proposed second edition, that Burns addressed a respectful letter to Miss Alexander of Ballochmyle, enclosing his song in her honour, and asking her permission to print it:—

TO MISS ALEXANDER.

MOSSGIEL, 18*th Nov.* 1786.

MADAM—Poets are such outré beings, so much the children of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world

generally allows them a larger latitude in the laws of propriety than the sober sons of judgment and prudence. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you in the enclosed poem, which he begs leave to present you with. Whether it has poetical merit anyway worthy of the theme, I am not the proper judge: but it is the best my abilities can produce; and what to a good heart will perhaps be a superior grace, it is equally sincere as fervent.

The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I daresay, madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *rêveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my Muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and to rob you of all the property nature gives you—your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn-twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely-browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene, and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape or met a poet's eye, those visionary bards excepted who hold commerce with aërial beings! Had Calumny and Villainy taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain dull historic prose into metaphor and measure!

The enclosed song was the work of my return home; and perhaps it but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene. * * * I have the honour to be, madam, your most obedient and very humble servant, R. B.

Two days afterwards, having occasion to transmit a copy of a ballad fit for private perusal only to two friends in Ayr, he enclosed it in a sheet penned in the style of a public writ, commencing: 'In the name of the Nine, Amen! We, Robert Burns, by virtue of a warrant from Nature, bearing date the twenty-fifth day of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine, Poet-Laureate and Bard-in-Chief in and

over the districts and countries of Kyle, Cunningham, and Carrick, of old extent, to our trusty and well-beloved William Chalmers and John M'Adam, students and practitioners in the ancient and mysterious science of confounding right and wrong;' commanding them to select 'the most execrable individual of that execrable species, the Deil's Yell Nowte [sheriff's officers],' and kindling a fire at the cross of Ayr, there at noon, to cause the said individual to burn the said ballad, 'in abhorrence of, and terrorem to, all such compositions and composers:' 'this in no wise leave ye undone, but have it executed in every point, as our mandate bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when in person we hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.' With such whimsicalities did Burns mix up the anxious, gloomy, and remorseful hours of this crisis of his life.

We obtain some insight into the prospects of Burns during November from a second letter of Dr Blacklock to Mr Lawrie, written on the 27th of the month. 'Some time ago,' says the blind bard, 'I took the freedom of troubling you with a letter, acknowledging the favour of Mr Burns's Poems; but at that time my mind was so full of their merit, that it entirely escaped my memory to inquire how much I was indebted for it; nor was this all, for instead of sending the letter by any of the channels to which I was directed, it was conveyed by the post, as I did not know where to find them' [the aforesaid channels].[1] [Before Saturday last] 'a report had reached me that a second edition of the Poems was projected, consisting, according to some, of twelve, or, according to others, of five thousand copies, at the expense of the gentlemen of Ayrshire, for the author's benefit.' Dr Blacklock feels disposed to remonstrate with the Ayrshire gentlemen for proposing so large an edition, as it might too long postpone another with additions; but he would fain offer them at the same time his 'warmest acknowledgments for the generous concern which they discovered in favour of poetical merit, and for that exquisite taste by which it has been so warmly and justly distinguished. It has also been suggested to me,' he adds, 'that my former [letter] to you was intended for publication [prefixed to the new edition]. I have not the least recollection of what was said in that letter. It was an unpremeditated effusion of pleasure and gratitude. So far, however, as I remember, there occurs to me no reason for retracting

[1] This is a curious trait of past times. The postage of the celebrated letter of 4th September was *fourpence;* and the writer deems it necessary to apologise for not sending it by some private hand or a carrier.

anything which it contained; yet you must grant me that it is one thing to talk to a friend, and quite another to address the public. I must therefore, if the letter is really designed to be printed, earnestly solicit you to review it, and to erase or correct anything which may appear to be careless, bombastic, or hyperbolical.'

It had been thought of great consequence by Mr Lawrie, that the Poems should be shewn by Blacklock to Dr Blair, who might be considered as the highest tribunal of criticism then in Scotland. The blind doctor now tells his country friend: '*A priori*, I will venture to assure you that most, if not all of the Scots poems will fail of gaining his approbation. His taste is too highly polished, and his genius too regular in its emotions, to make allowances for the sallies of a more impetuous ardour. Nor can he enter into the sentiment of Mr Pope—

> "Authors, 'tis true, may gloriously offend,
> And faults commit true critics dare not mend.
> From common rules with brave disorder part,
> And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art."'

So, the rumour of the new country edition had come to town, magnified from one to many thousands! The fact is important, as shewing the degree of wonder which had been raised in the capital itself regarding this singular ploughman and his effusions.

It is a curious memento of the eagerness with which the Kilmarnock volume was received, that no copy could be spared for the poet's own family at Mossgiel. Burns had always been free in communicating his best compositions to his mother and sisters; and the sisters would often gratify their mother by reading *Halloween, The Cotter's Saturday Night,* and other favourite pieces, by the fireside. They all valued the author highly, both as an amiable son and brother, and for the brilliant talents he possessed. The mother had no drawback to her admiration of his genius, but the fear that the éclat attending it might make him reflect less on the Giver of all good gifts than was his duty. They now heard reports of his spreading fame, not with much surprise, for they had never deemed him a common part of creation, but with deep-cherished pride and pleasure. Yet so it was, that they never possessed his effusions in a printed form till the issue of the abundant second edition from Edinburgh in the ensuing year.

'Imagination fondly stoops to trace' the sensations of this worthy humble family, when it appeared that he, whom, in spite of all blottings and errors, they had ever truly loved, began to

think that there was in store for him some fate more gentle than that of an exile to the West Indies. It must not be supposed, however, that their feelings met with fluent expression, and that the poet received great re-assurance from them. In Scottish humble life, it is no uncommon thing for men and women of the strongest feelings to keep them locked up from all external show, or only to reveal them under great and casual excitement. A certain habitual soberness of manner, or, it may be, a kind of false shame, often prevents the interchange of all expression of even the most forcible affections, so that life may pass and love be only shewn in its appropriate actions and sacrifices. This was the case with all the Burnses, excepting Robert only, who never attempted to conceal any of his stronger feelings. Gilbert was of a particularly reserved nature; and yet even he kindled up at the prospect of his brother's rescue from the house of bondage. He took a leading part in urging him to try his fortune in Edinburgh, and did all he could to smooth the way for the journey.

APPENDIX.

No. 1 (p. 8).—BURNS'S ANCESTRY.

THE paternal genealogy of the poet has been ascertained for several generations by Dr James Burnes, late physician-general of the Bombay Army. The first of the family who can be spoken of with confidence is

(I.) Walter Burness, who died in depressed circumstances in the parish of Glenbervie, in Kincardineshire. His son,

(II.) Walter Burness, being left in indigent circumstances, learned a trade, and living industriously and frugally, saved a little money, by which he was enabled to take the farm of Bogjorgan, in Glenbervie parish, where he lived till his death. He had a son, William, who succeeded him in his farm, and who died in 1715. Walter had three other sons, two of whom settled in the parish of Benholm.

Connected with William's tenantcy of Bogjorgan, a document has lately been discovered, which gives a very exact description of the accommodations required for a Scottish farmer at the beginning of the eighteenth century:—

'Ane note of the biging off Bogjorgine Belonging to William Stuart heritor thereoff given up be William Burnasse present tenent of the sd. Rowm and James Burnesse late possessore of the halff theroff upon the seventainth day of Jully 1705 years

Imp [a ffyr] houss consisting off thrie couplles ffour horses two taill postes ane midle wall with ane post ffrom the ground with ane rooff two pares in the syd with ane door bandet locked and bared and with ane window off two lightes bradet bandet and snecked with ane loume all to be sufficient

Item ane barne consisting of ffyve couplles four horses two taill postes ane Rooff thrie pares in the syd with ffor door locked and bandet and back door bared and steepled all to be sufficient

Item ane byre consisting of four couplles two in the syd ane rooff with door and door cheikes bandet all to be sufficient

It is declared be both parties that if ther be no other inventur ffound betwixt this and Whytsonday nixt 1706 yeares that this shall be ane tr[ue] inventur off the said William Burness at his removell from the said Roum In witness . . . . . beffor these witnesses Robt. Middletoun in Broombank and David Watson in Polburn wryter hereoff

Will. Stuart
1705

R. Midletone witnes
D. Watson wittnes and wrytr.

W B'

(III.) James Burnes (so his name is spelt on his headstone in the church-yard of Glenbervie), another son of Walter, became tenant of the farm of Bralinmuir, which his descendants continued to occupy till after the beginning of the present century. He died in 1743, at the age of eighty-seven. In the time when James Burnes lived, the Highlanders still kept up their old habit of making predatory incursions into the Mearns. On one occasion, when some *catterans*, as they were called, made an approach to Bralinmuir, the goodman adopted the expedient of hiding his loose cash in the nave of an old cart-wheel, which usually lay in the *jaw-hole* before the door, to perform duty as a sort of stepping-stone. Both ends of the aperture being plugged up, and the wheel laid down, as usual, in the puddle, the catterans stepped upon it in entering the house, without the faintest suspicion of what they were treading upon. James Burnes had five sons, four of whom he set up in farms. One of them, named James, his successor in the farm, is well remembered in the country. In advanced life, he married for his second wife a girl so young and inexperienced, that she could not spin or reel, and her husband had to teach her. As he had a hesitation in his speech, the words he used on this occasion appeared the more ridiculous to his neighbours, and they are accordingly still cited occasionally by old people.[1] Another of the sons of the first James,

(IV.) Robert Burnes rented the farm of Clockenhill, of a very poor soil, on the lands of Dunnottar, the estate of the Earl Marischal, who was attainted in 1716 for his concern in the Rebellion. It is about six miles west of Stonehaven, on the Lawrencekirk road. He reared three sons and four daughters on very insufficient means, and found himself at length involved in poverty. The eldest son, James, born in 1717, went to Montrose, and attained a respectable position in society. His son James, writer in Montrose, corresponded with his cousin the poet, and acted towards him the part of a kind and generous friend. A third James, the son of the above, and at one time provost of Montrose, but who latterly lived in retirement in Edinburgh, was the father of the late Sir Alexander Burnes, author of *Travels in Bokhara*, 3 vols. (1833), and whose melancholy death at Cabul in November 1841 was the presage of so dire an event to the arms of England; likewise of Dr James Burnes, above mentioned. Another son of Robert Burnes in Clockenhill was Robert, who left the paternal home at the same time with his brother William, and served for some time as a gardener in England, but returned to Scotland, where he died in the house of his nephew, the Scottish bard, in 1789. The third son of Robert Burnes,

(V.) William Burness, born about 1721, migrated to Ayrshire, where he died in 1784. He was the father of

(VI.) ROBERT BURNS, the SCOTTISH POET.

[1] These particulars are communicated by James Smith, Esq., accountant, Aberdeen.

It is an interesting circumstance regarding the poet's grandfather, that, notwithstanding his poverty, he had a liberal sense of the value of education for his children. He, in conjunction with some of the neighbouring farmers, built a school-house on the farm of Clockenhill, and engaged a teacher. It was the first school built in that part of the country. It will be observed that this was precisely the conduct afterwards pursued by his son William Burnes at Alloway; so that two generations of our poet's family had distinguished themselves by what was even for Scotland an extraordinary as well as most honourable sacrifice in behalf of education. The lease of Clockenhill expired about 1740; two of the farmer's sons, including William, then a mere youth, intended to renew the *tack*, but it was taken over their heads. They were thus put out of their little possessions; their stock was sold to pay their debts; the old man retired with his three unmarried daughters to a small farm called Denside, in the same parish, while the sons went off to push their fortunes with empty pockets.

There is a story which would seem to throw the date of the family sufferings for the Stuarts back into the seventeenth century. The first Walter Burness is represented as having been in reality named Walter Campbell. He is described as having been originally proprietor of a small domain in Argyleshire, called Burnhouse. It is stated that, having offended his chief, the Duke (Earl) of Argyle, by siding with the cause of the Stuarts at the Revolution, 'he was, much about the time of the noted massacre of Glencoe, obliged to abandon his native country, and wander to the Lowlands as a fugitive, accompanied by his only son, Walter, then a boy.' He dropped the name of Campbell, and was known by that of Burness —a corruption of Burnhouse, the place of his birth. He settled in the parish of Glenbervie, and there died. Dr James Burnes was so well convinced of the truth of this story, as to deem himself entitled to apply to the Lord Lyon's College for a patent of arms, which was granted to him, founded partly upon those of the family of Campbell.

From a privately printed brochure, prepared by Dr Burnes, it appears that this family tradition was reported in 1824 by John Burness of Stonehaven, a curious original, who had some share of his cousin's gift of verse, and was the author of a comic production, called *Thrummie Cap*. John Burness had heard the recital from the Rev. Alexander Greig, Episcopal minister in Stonehaven, whose mother's sister was the wife of William Burness, the grandson of the second Walter, and who died in 1793 at the age of eighty-six. Mr Greig had his chapel converted into a stable, and himself suffered six months' imprisonment, during the dark days of the Scottish Episcopal Church succeeding the insurrection of 1745. The story, however we are to receive it, requires at least some correction in point of date, for it is inadmissible that the grandfather of a person born in 1656, which was the case of James Burnes

of Bralinmuir, could be liable after the Revolution to change his residence on account of his political principles. If he had been represented as suffering in the troubles of the period between 1638 and 1660, belief would have been attended with less difficulty. It is, however, not impossible that, in the course of its transmission from mouth to mouth, the tradition suffered to this extent, and that the time of the Civil War was that actually referred to.

On the other hand, it is certain that, however Walter Burness acquired his name, it was one which did not take its rise in that manner, for it occurs in public documents of the age of Bruce. What is more to the purpose, the name of John Burnes, servitor to Sir Alexander Strachan of Thornton, knight-baronet, appears as witness to a disposition granted in 1637 by the Earl of Traquair, Treasurer of Scotland, in the name of the Scottish Exchequer. Thornton is situated within a few miles of Bogjorgan and Bralinmuir, on the estate of Inchbreck, 'whence,' says Dr Burnes, 'our family is known to have come.' Our finding a Burnes in the district in 1637, certainly reduces the likelihood of the family being Argyleshire refugees of the time of the Civil War. It must at the same time be admitted as not impossible, that the supposed Walter Campbell might be the more ready to adopt his territorial appellation as a surname in consequence of finding men of that name already in the country. A curious fact connected with this subject, is the mention by Horace Walpole of a correspondence carried on in 1742 by John Duke of Argyle with the head of the House of Stuart, under the pseudonyme of *Burnus* (so Walpole spells it). One could almost be disposed to question if there was not some predilection on the part of the Campbell family for Burnhouse, Burn'se, or Burness, as a subordinate appellative, to be used on occasions of difficulty, when their own name was not presentable.

Regarding the Cavalier character of Burns's ancestors, it is to be observed that he has affirmed it in the most direct manner. His first reference to the subject occurs in the original manuscript of his autobiography addressed to Dr Moore. There, after stating that his father was from the north of Scotland, he spoke of his ancestors as renting lands of the noble family of the Keiths, Earls Marischal, and as having had the honour of sharing their fate. 'I do not,' continues he, 'use the word honour with any reference to political principles; loyal and disloyal I take to be merely relative terms in that ancient and formidable court, known in this country by the name of club-law, where the right is always with the strongest. But those who dare welcome ruin, and shake hands with infamy, for what they sincerely believe to be the cause of God or their king, are, as Mark Antony says in Shakspeare of Brutus and Cassius, honourable men. I mention this circumstance, because it threw my father on the world at large.' Again, in his address to

William Tytler, he says with equal directness, speaking of the name of Stuart:

> 'My fathers that name have revered on a throne,
> My fathers have fallen to right it;
> Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,
> That name should he scoffingly slight it.'

Afterwards, writing to Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable (Dec. 16, 1789), he says: 'With your ladyship I have the honour to be connected by one of the strongest and most endearing ties in the whole moral world—common sufferers in a cause where even to be unfortunate is glorious, the cause of heroic loyalty! Though my fathers had not illustrious honours and vast properties to hazard in the contest—though they left their humble cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders—yet what they could they did, and what they had they lost: with unshaken firmness, and unconcealed political attachments, they shook hands with ruin for what they esteemed the cause of their king and country.'

What Gilbert Burns says on the other side is as follows:—'I do not know how my brother could be misled in the account he has given of the Jacobitism of his ancestors. I believe the Earl Marischal forfeited his title and estates in 1715, before my father was born; and among a collection of parish certificates in his possession, I have read one, stating that the bearer had no concern in the late wicked rebellion.'

It cannot fail to strike the reader that Gilbert here contradicts something which the poet did not assert. The question is not as to the father, but as to 'fathers,' meaning evidently more remote predecessors. William Burness might have been innocent of this honourable guilt, while his father was not. James Hogg reported his having heard from an old Kincardineshire gentleman named Hutchard, 'that Burns's grandfather and uncles were out in both rebellions, and that it rendered them obnoxious to the Whigs of that country, and reduced them in circumstances.'[1] There is certainly no great improbability in this statement, but rather the reverse, for the natal district of the family was remarkable for the attachment of the people to the House of Stuart. The very laws of the country placed Robert Burnes of Clockenhill, like all the other tenants of the Earl Marischal, under an obligation to follow his lord to the field.[2] Something to the same effect as Mr Hutchard's statement, only a little more general, was lately reported to Dr Burnes by a

[1] Hogg and Motherwell's edition of Burns, v. 23.

[2] Even if he evited this rule (which was not abrogated till 1748), he might well suffer in a different way in subsequent years, as the tenant of a farm which had been transferred from the care of the *natural landlord* to that of an unrelenting government commissioner. That he did so suffer, and thus fall into embarrassments, is an averment which has reached us from among his descendants in the north.

man named Taylor, eighty-seven years of age, residing at Drumlithie. After saying that he had heard that the original name of the family was Campbell, and that it had been changed *in consequence of a duel*, Taylor stated it as being notorious in his young days that 'the Burnesses had been out for the Stuarts.' They were chiefly, he added, of the Episcopal communion. Another circumstance favourable to the poet's account of the family, is its having such a person as the Rev. Mr Greig connected with it. On the whole, considering how weak is the contradiction brought forward by Gilbert, I see little reason to disbelieve that the poet's grandfather and grand-uncles were *out* in the affair of 1715–16, in attendance on the standard of the Earl Marischal. The fact was perhaps imparted as a family secret by William Burness to Robert, in consequence of the interest which the young bard took in such matters, and the sympathy which he felt with the ruined cause of the Stuarts; while to Gilbert, whose prepossessions were of an opposite complexion, the old man might not feel the same provocation to be communicative.

1853.—A descendant of one of James of Bralinmuir's sons, the Rev. D. Burness, Wiston, Lanarkshire, adduces reasons for doubting that Robert of Clockenhill, or any of his brothers, had a hand in the affair of 1715, or were at all Jacobitically inclined. This Robert, he says, was a Presbyterian; and the names of his children, from 1725 to 1732, are registered as having been baptised by the parish minister. One of his brothers, James, who succeeded the father in Bralinmuir, appears in 1723 as an elder of the parish of Glenbervie; so that he also is to be regarded as a Presbyterian. George, another brother, appears as witness at the Presbyterian baptising of Robert's children—which Mr D. B. thinks he never could have been if an Episcopalian. William, the fourth brother, can be traced as having never suffered in fortune from connection with the Stuart cause, nor anything else. Thomas, the fifth son, was only ten years of age in 1715, and dead before 1745. Thus Mr D. B. regards the bard's grandfather and grand-uncles as persons not at all likely to have been engaged in either of the rebellions.

On the whole, it now seems to me most probable, that the imputed Cavalier character of Burns's ancestry mainly arose from the facts, whatever they were, which gave rise to the story of the Argyleshire refugee Campbell. If the first Walter was a Campbell and a Royalist in the time of the Civil War, it is pretty certain that his native district would be no place for him. It might be some faint echo of this family legend which the poet heard, and it might be by some mistake on his part, that the period was changed to the eighteenth-century rebellions, and the circumstances put into a connection with the fortunes of the Marischal family.

No. 2 (p. 21).—BURNS'S MOTHER.

A few further particulars of the poet's mother, from the recollection of his youngest sister, may be thought worthy of preservation, as characteristic of the old peasant-life of Scotland.

Gilbert Brown, of Craigenton, in Carrick, was thrice married, and the poet's mother, Agnes Brown, was his eldest child by the first marriage. She was only nine years of age when her mother died, leaving four younger children. When the mother's death was looked for, a sister came to see her, and was surprised to find how cheerful she was. 'Are you not sorry to leave your husband and children?' asked the sister. 'No,' was the answer; 'I leave my children to the care of God, and Gilbert will soon get another wife.' The father, being of ultra-frugal habits, kept all his servants engaged in the farm and house work; so that the charge of the children fell to the care of the eldest, herself a mere child, but no doubt forced into a premature thoughtfulness by the extraordinary circumstances.

Agnes had been taught to read her Bible, and repeat the Psalms, by a weaver in the village, who kept such young pupils beside his loom as he sat at work. At her mother's death, this kind of education came to a stop, and it was never resumed. The mother of Burns was never able even to write her own name. Her mind was shrewd and intelligent, but unavoidably warped with prejudices, though not to a serious extent.

After her father's second marriage, Agnes Brown was sent to live with her mother's mother, a good worthy soul, who in her younger days had sheltered the persecuted Covenanters. When this old person was more than ordinarily pleased with her grand-daughter's doings at the wheel, she gave her, as her *ten hours* or lunch, a piece of brown bread, with a piece of white as *kitchen* to it, both being only varieties of oatmeal-cake.

While here, Agnes occasionally acted as *gaudsman* or horse-driver to the ploughman, William Nelson, and assisted him to thrash the corn with the flail. They became attached, and were engaged for seven years, when, at the mature age of twenty-six, she gave him up, in consequence of a moral lapse on his part, of the kind most apt to alienate the affections of a pure-minded woman. Soon after, William Burness happened to meet her at a Maybole fair. He had been well affected to a girl he used to meet frequently at Alloway Mill; and he had kept a letter addressed to that maiden for some time locked up in his trunk. He was now so much pleased with Agnes, that immediately on returning home, he took the epistle from his trunk and burnt it. After he had been Agnes's devoted admirer for a twelvemonth, they were married, and little more than another year made them the parents of the most remarkable man of his age in Scotland.

Mrs Burness had a fine complexion, with pale red hair, and

beautiful dark eyes. She was of a neat small figure, extremely active and industrious—naturally cheerful, but in later life possessed by anxieties, no doubt a consequence of the life of hardships and difficulties through which it had been her lot to pass. She sang very well, and had a never-failing store of old ballads and songs, on which her poetical son must have fed in his boyhood. As a trait of the life of Mrs Burness in the days of sadness which preceded her husband's death, Mrs Begg remembers the old man coming in one day from sowing, very weary. He had used all the thrashed-up grain, and was now desirous of preparing some for dinner to the horses; but his worthy helpmate, on seeing his fatigued state, insisted that he should refresh himself by a rest, while she herself would see that the beasts were duly cared for. The heroic little woman then went to the barn with her servant, Lizzy Paton, and the two soon had the necessary corn for the horses both thrashed and winnowed. Such was the household of the youthful Burns. Who can but regret that the lot of such a family was not from the first a kindlier one!

The low deal-chair on which Agnes Brown nursed all her offspring—a very interesting relic of a poet's mother—is preserved by Sir James Stuart Menteath, Bart., on whose paternal estate she lived many years.

No. 3 (p. 6).—THE BOOKS READ BY BURNS IN EARLY LIFE.

It will be observed, from the various recitals regarding Burns's early years, that he had had access to a considerable number of books in his boyhood and youth. A distinct catalogue of them may serve to give a tolerably clear idea of the advantages of this kind which he possessed. It must be seen that a person having in early life so many books at his command, and who really read and studied them, could not be considered as an uneducated man.

IN EARLY BOYHOOD.

We may place first in the roll, the books which every child attending school in Scotland is sure to find in his hands:—

The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly.
The Bible.

Other school-books:—

A Spelling Book.
Fisher's English Grammar.
Mason's English Collection.

IN LATER BOYHOOD.

Borrowed from Mr Murdoch:—
The Life of Hannibal.

Borrowed at a later period from Kilpatrick, the blacksmith:—
The Life of Sir William Wallace. [Hamilton of Gilbertfield's reduction of the poem of Henry the Minstrel.]

Given by Mr Murdoch as presents:—
A Compendium of English Grammar.
The School for Love, a comedy translated from the French.

Borrowed by William Burness for his children:—
Salmon's Geographical Grammar.
Derham's Physico-Theology.
Ray's Wisdom of God in the Works of Creation.

Given by a maternal uncle:—
The Ready Reckoner.
A Collection of Letters.

Borrowed from Mrs Paterson of Ayr:—
The Spectator.
Pope's Translation of Homer.

Borrowed from Mr Hamilton of Bourtreehill's gardener:—
A volume of English history (period of James I. and Charles I.)

Otherwise borrowed:—
Ferdinand Count Fathom.
Two volumes of Peregrine Pickle.

Otherwise obtained, and mostly the property of William Burness:—
Bayle's Lectures. [There appears to be no such book as Bayle's Lectures. It is probably a misprint for the well-known *Boyle Lecture* Sermons on Natural and Revealed Religion, abridged by Gilbert Burnet, 4 vols. 8vo.]
Stackhouse's History of the Bible.
The Spectator.
Taylor on the Doctrine of Original Sin.
Hervey's Meditations.
Justice's British Gardener's Directory.
Tull and Dickson on Agriculture.
Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding.
The Pantheon.
The Works of Allan Ramsay.
A Select Collection of English Songs [The Lark, 2 vols.]
The Works of Pope.
Several Plays of Shakspeare.

No. 4 (p. 39).—'MY NANNIE, O.'

It can be, in general, a matter of very little importance to the public, indeed little more than a gratification of curiosity, to ascertain upon which of the rustic maidens within his observation Burns composed any of his songs. Sometimes, however, a peculiarity of Burns's temper and tastes, or some circumstance affecting the texture of his life, may be concerned, and then the subject is not without its value.

In Wood's *Songs of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 3 vols., 1849) there is a note on this subject, in which a statement originating in Cunningham's edition respecting the song of *Wandering Willie* is contradicted, and the writer then adverts in the following terms to *My Nannie, O:*—'A hunt was made for a heroine by an annotator, when it was discovered that a servant-girl, named Agnes Fleming, had lived near Lochlea at the time that William Burness occupied that farm. This evidence was thought quite sufficient. No more was sought. The note was written—the affair was settled,' &c. The writer goes on to say: 'Who, until some fifty years after the poet's death, ever heard of his making love to Agnes Fleming either in prose or verse? Then was Nannie disintombed, that she might, like an Egyptian mummy, be embalmed in the poet's verse, merely because she had the good-luck to be *kirsened* Nannie or Agnes.'

I know nothing of the hunt here spoken of; but certainly the writer is mistaken in thinking that the assignment of this honour to Agnes Fleming was unheard of till fifty years after the poet's death. Mr George Thomson, in 1819, used some diligence in ascertaining from Mr Gilbert Burns and Mrs Robert Burns the names of such persons as they believed to have been contemplated by the poet in writing his songs. In a letter of Gilbert (Grant's Braes, 3d June 1819) to Mr Thomson, now before me, I find the following:—'*My Nannie, O,* was a farmer's daughter in Torbolton parish, *the name Fleming.*' Mr Thomson published this statement, which was subsequently adopted by Cunningham and other editors.

The writer of the note in *Wood's Songs* goes on to argue, that Burns wrote *My Nannie, O,* in honour of Peggy Thomson, the Kirkoswald fillette, but without advancing any stronger proof than the fact, that the poet did love Peggy, which he avers was never the case of Agnes. I find that Mrs Begg also is of opinion, that Peggy Thomson was the theme of *My Nannie, O.* It may be so; but the writer in Wood assumes too much in saying, that there is no evidence for Agnes Fleming having ever been loved by the poet. Gilbert, after mentioning her name, goes on to say, 'to whom the poet paid some of that roving attention which he was continually devoting to some one.' The averment of the brother and bosom-friend of Burns must be next, in a case of this kind, to his own.

It is admitted on all hands, that Agnes Fleming was not a beauty.

She in this respect illustrates the statement of Gilbert with regard to the female subjects of his brother's verses, that 'there was often a great disparity between his fair captivator and her attributes.' One cannot but experience a twinge in contrasting the exquisite picture of loveliness conveyed in the song with the reality; yet, under the aspect which the question has taken, I am bound to add the following from Gilbert's letter, by way of supporting what seems to have the superior evidence in its favour:—'Her charms were indeed mediocre; but what she had were sexual, which was indeed the characteristic of the greater part of the poet's mistresses. He was no Platonic lover, whatever he might pretend or suppose of himself.'

Agnes Fleming was at one time a servant in the house of Mr Gavin Hamilton, by whose family she is remembered as a plain-looking woman, but of good figure and carriage. The poor woman herself never made any pretensions regarding this specimen of divine poesy, beyond saying that the bard once told her he had written a song about her.

No. 5 (p. 92).—TORBOLTON MASON LODGES.

There is some obscurity about Burns's masonic affiliation; but the following appears to be as nearly as possible the true series of circumstances:—

The St James's Torbolton Lodge, No. 178, was constituted by a charter from Kilwinning in 1771. A number of members left the St James's in 1773, and formed themselves, with some new entrants, into the St David's Lodge. A union of the two took place on the 25th June 1781, and it was agreed that the one lodge then constituted should bear the name of St David's; probably a compliment or concession designed to appease the schismatic body. Burns was admitted an apprentice in this sole Torbolton Lodge, styled St David's, on the 4th July, and passed and raised on the 1st of October 1781, and these transactions are recorded in the books peculiar to the distinct St David's Lodge. A new disruption took place in June 1782, and the separating body then re-constituted the St James's Lodge. Burns was of this party, and thenceforward his name is found only in the books of the distinct St James's Lodge. It would therefore appear, that though entered in what was nominally the St David's Lodge, he does not properly belong to the detached lodge now bearing that name, but to the lodge distinctly called the St James's, which he has immortalised in verse.

Somewhat unexpectedly, indeed, his admission into the Dumfries St Andrew's Lodge, on the 27th December 1788, is signified in the book of that body in the following terms:—'The Brethren having selebrated the aniversary of St John in the usual manner, and Brother Robt. Burns in Aillieslaud, of St David's Strabolton Lodge No. 178, being present, the Lodge unanimously assumed him a

Member of the Lodge, being a Master mason, and he subscribed the regulations as a member. (Signed) SIM. MACKENZIE.'

It might have been expected that Burns would describe himself as belonging to the St James's Lodge. Possibly, however, it was necessary to mention the name of the lodge in which he was entered: or it might be a mistake of the Dumfries secretary, putting down St David's for St James's—a circumstance the more probable, as No. 178 is the number of the St James's Lodge, while that of the St David's is 174.

No. 6 (p. 118).—THE ROCKING-SONG.

It has lately been discovered that Lapraik could not justly pretend to be the author of the song *When I upon thy bosom lean*. In the *Weekly Magazine*, October 14, 1773, is a piece, entitled *Lines Addressed by a Husband to his Wife after being Six Years Married, and sharing a great variety of Fortune together*, and running as follows:—

'When on thy bosom I recline,
Enraptured still to call thee mine,
To call thee mine for life;
I glory in the sacred ties,
Which modern wits and fools despise,
Of husband and of wife.

One mutual flame inspires our bliss;
The tender look, the melting kiss,
Even years have not destroyed;
Some sweet sensation ever new
Springs up and proves the maxim true,
Chaste love can ne'er be cloyed.

Have I a wish—'tis all for thee;
Hast thou a wish—'tis all for me;
So soft our moments move,
That numbers look with ardent gaze,
Well pleased to see our happy days,
And bid us live and love!

If care arise (and cares will come)
Thy bosom is my softest home,
I lull me there to rest;
And is there aught disturbs my fair,
I bid her sigh out all her care,
And lose it in my breast.

Have I a joy—'tis all her own,
Or hers and mine are all but one,
Our hearts are so entwined,
That like the ivy round the tree,
Bound up in closest amity,
'Tis death to be disjoined.

EDIN. *Oct.* 11. A HAPPY HUSBAND.'

There cannot be a doubt that this rustic bard had fallen upon these verses, and, ignorant of the principles of literary morality, deemed himself at liberty to make a song, assumedly his own, out of them, and to publish this without any acknowledgment of the source of his ideas. His song, as here printed, appeared in a volume of 'Poems,' which he published at Kilmarnock in 1788. Burns, who probably never knew or suspected the plagiarism, afterwards dressed up the song as follows for *Johnson's Museum*:—

'When I upon thy bosom lean,
And fondly clasp thee a' my ain,
I glory in the sacred ties
That made us ane wha ance were twain:
A mutual flame inspires us baith,
The tender look, the melting kiss;
Even years can not destroy our love,
But only gie us change o' bliss.

Ha'e I a wish, 'tis a' for thee;
I ken thy wish is me to please:
Our moments pass sae smooth away,
That numbers on us look and gaze;
Weel pleased they see our happy days,
Nor Envy's sel' finds aught to blame;
And aye when weary cares arise,
Thy bosom still shall be my hame.

I'll lay me there and tak my rest,
And if that aught disturbs my dear,
I'll bid her laugh her cares away,
And beg her not to drap a tear:
Ha'e I a joy, 'tis a' her ain,
United still her heart and mine;
They're like the woodbine round the tree,
That's twined till death shall them disjoin.'

No. 7 (p. 122).—TAYLOR ON ORIGINAL SIN.

The title of this work is, *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination:* By John Taylor. The first edition was published in 1740. The third, dated 1750, is an 8vo volume of nearly 500 pages.

In the first part, the author starts with the admission, that 'all truth necessary to salvation is revealed in the Holy Scriptures.' He immediately adds: 'As for human wisdom and knowledge, I ought to value it, in religious matters, just so much, and so far only, as it serves to unfold the mind and meaning of God in the Scriptures; in the interpretation of which we ought not to admit anything contradictory to the common sense and understanding of mankind.'

He then proceeds to say, that there are no more than five places

in the Bible where the consequences of the first sin are certainly spoken of. I. Gen. ii. 17. 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' He argues that the punishment here threatened is simply the loss of that life which God had lately conferred upon Adam. He remarks, that there is not one word here relating to Adam's posterity. II. Gen. iii. 7–24. 'And the eyes of them both were opened,' &c. In this text the commentator sees only that, Adam having sinned, and fallen under guilt, shame, and fear, 'God graciously proposed to continue his race, to appoint his Son, the Messiah, to oppose the kingdom of the Devil, now begun by the sin of Adam, but withal subjected the man to sorrow, labour, and death.' III. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. 'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' 'From this place,' he says, 'we cannot conclude that any other evil or death came upon mankind in consequence of Adam's first transgression, besides that death from which mankind shall be delivered at the resurrection; whatever that death be.' IV. Rom. v. 12–19. 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,' &c. The author acknowledges that this text is more difficult; but after a long and subtle argument, he arrives at this conclusion, that, 'furthermore, God in Christ hath bestowed upon us mercy and gifts, privileges and advantages, both in this and a future world, abundantly beyond the reversing of any evils we are subject to in consequence of Adam's sin.' V. 1 Tim. ii. 14. On this text the author makes no remarks.

The second part of the work is devoted to an examination of the principal passages of Scripture which have been applied in support of the common scheme of original sin, and have not been discussed in the first part. The passages examined are those adduced as proofs for the propositions laid down in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. After discussing the whole, he says: 'I cannot see that we have advanced one step further than where we were at the conclusion of the first part—namely, that the consequences of Adam's first transgression upon us are labour, sorrow, and mortality.' He elsewhere adds: 'And that thereupon a new dispensation, abounding with grace, was erected in a Redeemer.'

It would be beyond my province to enter more largely into the subject of this book, or to trace the discussions arising from it; but as it was one which is understood to have exercised some influence, at least for a time, over the mind of our great national poet, I thought it well to shew the principal conclusions which it endeavours to establish.

No. 8 (p. 138).—GAVIN HAMILTON AND THE MAUCHLINE KIRK-SESSION.

The parochial persecution of Gavin Hamilton was not now terminated. On the 27th October (1785), the Session resolved not to erase the minutes of which he had complained, 'because he continues to give more and more offence by neglect of public ordinances, and that in disobedience to the recommendation of the reverend presbytery.'

On the 2d of August 1787, the Session is informed that Gavin Hamilton, on the last Lord's Day, caused his servant, James Brayan, to dig some potatoes in his garden. By a letter of the 8th September, Mr Hamilton makes the following explanation:—'I was walking with my children in the forenoon in the garden, when some of them petitioned for a few new potatoes, having got none that season. I considered the request as so very reasonable, particularly from those who made it, that I did not scruple to listen to their demands; nor had I an idea that raising a few potatoes in a private garden would have given offence to any person, more than pulling any garden stuff.'

In their answer, the Session express doubt of the fact of the children having had none that season, 'being informed that there were new potatoes in his house some days before that Sabbath, for proving whereof, if necessary, witnesses are named.' Some time after, they find that two and a half rows of potatoes, each row ten or eleven feet long, were dug, and that the child was employed to gather them; they therefore pass sentence, ordering Mr Hamilton to appear and profess repentance. How this matter terminated as to Mr Hamilton, does not appear; but on the 13th January 1788, James Brayan stood a rebuke for having dug the potatoes.

There seems to have been a degree of religious zeal and scrupulosity at Mauchline beyond what was common. In the course of the general election of 1790, the kirk-session declined to allow a precept of the sheriff to be read from the precentor's desk 'before the forenoon's blessing;' and for this, as an act in contempt of court, the minister, elders, and clerk were fined £5, besides paying £3, 3s. of expenses.

On zeal beyond discretion how painful often the comment afforded by the infirmity of our common nature! Sad to tell, of the three zealous elders constituting, along with the minister, the court by which Mr Hamilton was prosecuted, and Burns rebuked, one put a period to his own life, and another died in a drunken fit after becoming a convicted larcenist.

'December 12, 1791.—Died at Mauchline, the Rev. William Auld, in the eighty-third year of his age, and fiftieth of his ministry, universally beloved and regretted.'—*Newspaper Obit.*

No. 9 (p. 280).—THE METRES OF BURNS.

The English reader will not have failed to remark, that some of the forms of verse employed by Burns are different from any in use among southern poets. In these matters, the Ayrshire bard was of course led by the fashions set before him by the poets with whose works he was familiar. He had studied Fergusson and Ramsay with veneration. In their volumes it is easy to trace the models of versification which Burns followed, and in many instances, as has been noted, the particular productions which he condescended in some degree to imitate.

The stanza which, from the frequency with which he uses it, may be presumed to have been his favourite, is the peculiar one employed in the *Verses to a Mouse*. By modern Scottish bards it had been largely employed for comic subjects: it was reserved for Burns to shew that it was not incapable of expressing solemn feeling and energetic description: the bard of Rydal Mount afterwards gave it the stamp of his approbation. Fergusson, the immediate predecessor of Burns, found many poems in this stanza in the volumes of Ramsay. Ramsay found it in use with his senior contemporary, Hamilton of Gilbertfield; and Hamilton, again, had before him several poems of the same form, which had been produced before the middle of the seventeenth century by Robert Semple of Beltrees. It is curious to find at that early period burlesque elegies on the noted piper Habbie Simpson, and 'Sandy Briggs, butler to the Laird of Kilbarchan,' exactly resembling that of Burns on Tam Samson. For example, from the elegy on Briggs:—

'Wha 'll jaw ale on my drouthy tongue, — pour
To cool the heat o' light and lung?
Wha 'll bid me, when the kail-bell 's rung, — dinner-bell
To board me speed?
Wha 'll set me by the barrel bung,
Since Sandy 's dead?

Wha 'll set me dribbling by the tap?
While winking I begin to nap,
Then lay me down, and weel me hap, — cover
And bin' my head.
I needna think to get ae drap,
Since Sandy 's dead.

Well did the master-cook and he
Wi' giff-gaff courtesies agree, — reciprocal
While tears as fast as kitchen-fee
Drapt frae his head.
Alake a day! though kind to me,
Yet now he 's dead!'

It has been thought that Semple was the inventor of this stanza, but it may be traced in slightly different forms amongst the writers of

the preceding century. We find Sir Richard Maitland employing one only differing from it in the want of a line—which of course it was easy for a subsequent poet to add. Sir Richard, who died in 1589 at the age of ninety, has occasion to console himself for his want of the vigour of youth:—

'My horse, my harness, and my spear,
And all other, my hosting gear, — soldiering stuff
May now be sauld;
I am not able for the weir,
I am sae auld.

When young men comis frae the green,
Playand at the foot-ball had been,
With broken spauld, — shoulder-blade
I thank my God I want my e'en,
And am sae auld.'

Sir Richard himself gives an example of the full form of the stanza, only with a fifth rhyme in the second last line. He is bewailing 'the Evils of New-found Laws:'—

'Lord punish them that aye pretendit
For to do wrang, or to defend it;
In haste let them be apprehendit,
And thole the law,
Or gar them mend it,
Whom they offendit
In deed or saw.'

When we go seventy years further back, we find the germ of the stanza in a peculiar group of the poems of Dunbar, where rhymed couplets were somewhat conceitedly associated with alternate rhymes. Thus, for example, in his *Tidings fra the Session*:—

'Some, biding the law, lays land in wed; — pledge
Some super-expended goes to his bed;
Some speeds, for he in court has means;
Some of partiality compleins,
How feid and favour flemes discretion;
Some speaks full fair, and falsely feigns:
Sic tidings heard I at the Session.'

Beyond the commencement of the 16th century, it does not seem possible to trace this stanza even in its most rudimentary state.

Another of the favourite metres of Burns, is that employed in his first *Epistle to Davie*—a remarkably complicated and difficult stanza, but which our poet had so completely mastered through his extraordinary command of language, that he would employ it in scribbling a note on the most trivial business to a friend. This stanza was adopted by Ramsay in a poem entitled *The Vision*, which he wrote in the style of a former age, and passed off in his *Evergreen* as a genuine production of the elder Muse. Ramsay found his model in the well-known poem styled *The Cherry and the Slae*, by Alexander Montgomery, who flourished in the reign of James VI. This is an

allegorical piece of somewhat tedious length, but in a style of poesy far from vulgar or tame. For example—

'The air was sober, soft, and sweet,
But misty vapours, wind, and weet,
Bot quiet, calm, and clear;
To foster Flora's fragrant flowers,
Whereon Apollo's paramours
Had trickled many a tear;
The which like silver shakers shined,
Embroidering Beauty's bed;
Wherewith their heavy heads declined,
All in May's colours clad:
Some knopping, some dropping
Of balmy liquor sweet;
Excelling in smelling
Through Phœbus' wholesome heat.'

The stanza was used by a poet who lived before the days of Montgomery, though only, as far as is known, in one piece. This piece is *Ane Ballat of the Creation of the World*, written by Sir Richard Maitland. It recites the facts of the Scripture narrative with little embellishment and much simplicity, as is well exemplified in a verse apostrophising the unfortunate mother of the human race:—

'O delicate dame, with ears bent,
That harkened to that false serpent,
Thy banes we may sair ban.
Without excuse thou art to blame,
Thou justly hast obteined that name—
The very Wo of Man.
With tears we may bewail and greet weep
That wicked time and tide,
When Adam was caused to sleep,
And thou ta'en of his side:
No sleeping, but weeping
Thy seed has fund sinsyne;
Thy eating and sweating
Is turned to wo and pyne.'

As Maitland wrote this curious poem 'to the tune of the Banks of Helicon,' we may safely assume that there was at least one previous example of the stanza. It occurs not, however, in any of the poems of Dunbar, Douglas, Henryson, or other of the early 'Makars.'

A third stanza worthy of special notice, is that employed in the *Holy Fair* and *Ordination*. Here Burns directly imitated Fergusson's *Leith Races* and *Hallow Fair;* but the stanza was first brought into vogue by Ramsay, in the continuation which he wrote of *Christ's Kirk of the Green*. The poem last mentioned was published a little before the time when Ramsay flourished, by Bishop Gibson, being derived from a manuscript of the sixteenth century. It has been supposed by some to be a composition of King James I., by others of James V.; but without the slightest grounds beyond conjecture for

either supposition. It is to be observed, that the form of the stanza was slightly altered by Ramsay, and with an improvement in both sound and pith. Of the original, the following verse from the description of a village brawl may serve as an example :—

'The miller was of manly mak,
To meet him was nae mows; jest
There durst not ten come him to tak,
Sae knoited he their pows:
The bushment hale about him brak,
And bickered him with bows;
Syne traiterously, behind his back,
They hewit him on the houghs, hams
Behind,
At Christ's Kirk of the Green that day.'

A poem, apparently of earlier date, entitled *Peebles to the Play*, is in the same stanza, with a slight difference in the termination, the characteristic phrase 'that day' being wanting. This has also been supposed, but on very slight grounds, to be the composition of James I. of Scotland. Though apparently a production of the fifteenth century, it was not published till 1785, and it was probably unknown to Burns at the time when his volume was published.

No. 10 (p. 293).—SALE OF THE KILMARNOCK EDITION.

The original of the account of John Wilson of Kilmarnock for the printing of Burns's Poems, with a list of subscribers, or rather of persons to whom Wilson gave out copies on account of the author, is in possession of Robert Cole, Esq., of 52 Upper Norton Place, London.

It first gives particulars as to the disposal of 70 copies by Mr Wilson himself, at 3s. per copy. Among the names occur those of Mr W. Parker, Mr Samson (hero of the Elegy), Mr Ralph Sellars (a member of the Torbolton Bachelors' Club), Mr Rankine [of Adamhill?], and Mr John Neilson (5 copies). Mr Aiken, of Ayr, gets one copy on the 31st of July—12 copies on the 5th August, 20 on the 10th, 40 on the 12th, 36 on the 14th, and 36 more on the 16th; being nearly one-fourth of the whole impression disposed of in a few days by this zealous friend of the author. Gilbert Burns states that Mr William Parker of Kilmarnock was a subscriber for 35 copies of the first edition of his brother's poems. This is not confirmed by the present paper; but Mr Robert Muir, another Kilmarnock friend of the bard, and one of whom he speaks after his death in the tenderest terms, obtains on the 2d August 2 copies, and between that and the 17th, 70 more. Perhaps Gilbert has inadvertently given Parker's name instead of Muir's.

'Mr Smith, Mauchline'—doubtless the bosom-friend of the poet—obtains on the 4th August 1 copy, and on the 8th, 40. Mr

Hamilton on the 18th obtains 40 copies. David Sillar seems to have disposed of 14; Mr Kennedy, Dumfries House, of 20; John Logan, Esq., of Laight, of 20; Mr Walter Morton, Cumnock, of 6; Mr Niven, Maybole (the 'Willie' of the Kirkoswald school-days), of 7; Mr Gilbert Burns, of 70; Mr M'Whinnie, of 20. Burns himself receives a copy on the 3d of August; another on the 4th; one more on the 5th.

On August 28, less than a month after the volume was ready, 599 had been disposed of, and there then remained on hand only 15.

The account of Wilson for printing is as follows:—

Mr Robert Burns,

To John Wilson, *Dr.*

Aug. 28, 1786.	Printing 15 sheets at 19s.,				£14	5	0
	19 Reams 13 quires paper at 17s.,				16	4	0
	Carriage of the paper,				0	8	9
	Stitching 612 copies in blue paper at 1¾d.,				4	9	3
					£35	17	0
Aug. 19.	By cash,	£6	3	0			
" 28.	" "	14	13	0			
	By 70 copies,	10	10	0			
					31	6	0
					£4	11	0
	By 9 copies,				1	7	0
					£3	4	0
Oct. 6th.	By cash in full,				3	4	0
Kilmarnock,	Settled the above account,						

John Wilson.

It appears that Mr Wilson had here, by an error in his arithmetic, undercharged the poet ten shillings—the second item in the account being properly £16, 14s., instead of £16, 4s.

Six hundred copies, at 3s. each, would produce £90; and if there were no more to be deducted from that sum than the expenses of paper, print, and stitching, there would remain upwards of £54 as profit. The poet, however, speaks of realising only £20 by the speculation.

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. and R. Chambers.

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

Library Edition

THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

EDITED BY ROBERT CHAMBERS

Library Edition

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME II

W. & R. CHAMBERS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLVI

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. and R. Chambers.

*** The Italic letters indicate the publication in which the several compositions respectively appeared; see note prefixed to the Contents of Volume I. Pieces which have not appeared in any previous edition of the poet's works are marked *n*. The letter *o* refers to the authorised edition of the Letters to Clarinda, Edinburgh, 1843.

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BURNS was ready on the day fixed upon to set out for Edinburgh—a journey of about sixty miles. Dr Currie states that he travelled on foot; but it appears from a note of correction which had been sent by Gilbert Burns to the biographer,[1] but never made use of, that the poet was in reality carried by a pony which he had borrowed from a friend. This statement comports with an anecdote respecting the poet's journey which has been related by Mr Archibald Prentice, lately editor of the *Manchester Times*. It appears that, through an Ayrshire friend, George Reid of Barquharry, Burns had been made acquainted with Mr Prentice's father, the farmer of Covington-Mains, in Lanarkshire—a zealous admirer of his poetry, as is amply testified by his name being set down in the list of subscribers for the second edition for *twenty copies*. According to Mr Prentice:[2]

[1] *Life of Dr Currie*, by his son, 2 vols.

[2] Letter of Mr Prentice to Professor Wilson, dated March 8, 1841, and published in the *Edinburgh Intelligencer* newspaper.

'It was arranged by Mr Reid that Burns should, on his journey to Edinburgh, make the farmhouse at Covington-Mains his resting-place on the first night. All the farmers in the parish had read with delight the poet's then published works, and were anxious to see him. They were all asked to meet him at a late dinner, and the signal of his arrival was to be a white sheet attached to a pitchfork, and put on the top of a cornstack in the barnyard. The parish is a beautiful amphitheatre, with the Clyde winding through it, with Wellbrae Hill to the west, Tinto and the Culter Fells to the south, and the pretty, green, conical hill, Quothquan Law, to the east. My father's stackyard lying in the centre, was seen from every house in the parish. At length Burns arrived, mounted on a *pownie* borrowed of [the George Reid of Barquharry aforesaid.] [1] Instantly was the white flag hoisted, and as instantly were seen the farmers issuing from their houses, and converging to the point of meeting. A glorious evening, or rather night, which borrowed something from the morning, followed, and the conversation of the poet confirmed and increased the admiration created by his writings. On the following morning, he breakfasted with a large party at the next farmhouse, tenanted by James Stodart, brother to the Stodarts, the pianoforte-makers of London; took lunch also with a large party at the Bank, in the parish of Carnwath, with John Stodart, my mother's father, and rode into Edinburgh that evening on the *pownie*, which he returned to the owner in a few days afterwards by John Samson, the brother of the immortalised "TAM." Mr Samson took with him a letter to Mr Reid, in which the poet expressed the great pleasure he had experienced in meeting his friends at Covington.' [He says: 'I left Mr Prentice's on Monday night. There was a most agreeable little party in the evening; a Mr Lang, a dainty body of a clergyman; a glorious good fellow, and a still more glorious good wife, Mr and Mrs Stodart, with whom I breakfasted along with Mr Prentice next morning. For Mr Prentice, no words can do him justice. Sound sterling sense and plain warm hospitality are truly his.' [2]]

'My father,' adds Mr Prentice, 'was exactly the sort of man to draw forth all the higher powers of Burns's mind. He combined

[1] Mr Prentice stated here the name of 'a Mr Dalrymple, near Ayr.' That the fact, however, was as above stated, is perfectly clear from a letter of Burns himself, afterwards quoted.

[2] From the original in possession of Samuel Wellstood, Jersey city, U. S. The letter begins: 'John Samson begged your pownie in such a manner, seconded by Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, that I hope you will forgive my not returning him by the carrier.'

physical and moral strength in an extraordinary degree; had a great deal of practical knowledge; had read and thought much; had a high relish for *manly* poetry; much benevolence; much indignation at oppression, which nobody dared to exercise within his reach; and no mean conversational powers. Such was the person to appreciate Burns—ay, and to reverence the man who penned *The Cotter's Saturday Night;* and accordingly, though a strictly moral and religious man himself, he always maintained that the virtues of the poet greatly predominated over his faults. I once heard him exclaim with hot wrath, when somebody was quoting from an *Apologist!* "What! do *they* apologise for *him!* One-half of his good, and all his bad, divided amang a score o' them, would make them a' better men!"

'When a lad of seventeen, in the year 1809, I resided for a short time in Ayrshire, in the hospitable house of my father's friend Reid, and surveyed with a strong interest such visitors as had known Burns. I soon learned how to anticipate their representations of his character. The men of strong minds and strong feelings were invariable in their expressions of admiration; but the prosy consequential *bodies* all disliked him as exceeding dictatorial. The men whose religion was based on intellect and high moral sentiment all thought well of him; but the mere professors, with their "twa-mile prayers and half-mile graces," denounced him as "worse than an infidel."'

Burns reached Edinburgh on the 28th November, a day remarkable in the history of the city as that on which Mr Palmer's mail-carriages were started, by which letters were to be conveyed between the two capitals of the island in the then surprisingly brief space of sixty hours! One can imagine that it would be with no tame feelings that the peasant-bard would hail the romantic capital of his country, whose ancient history had poured a tide of enthusiasm through his heart. As the seat of her chivalrous kings, of her ancient and once independent legislature, of her long series of poets and philosophers, he would view it with a glowing mind, and, mixed with classic associations, there would doubtless be some reflections on the prospects with which it was charged for himself. He came, as he tells us, without a single letter of introduction, and, we cannot doubt, with very little money in his pocket. Besides Professor Stewart, whose rank and avocations placed him at an ideal distance, he had scarcely a single acquaintance among the ordinary inhabitants of Edinburgh. There was, however, one friend whom he could readily approach.

This was John Richmond, not long ago the clerk of Gavin Hamilton, and the companion of Burns and Smith in many a merry 'splore' at Mauchline. Richmond was now in a writer's office in the city. He occupied a humble room in Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, for which he paid at the time three shillings a week. Into this lodging he willingly received the Ayrshire poet, giving him a share of his bed—of which Burns stood so much in need by reason of indisposition, that he kept possession of it all the succeeding day.

Allan Cunningham relates, apparently from some well-informed source, the first proceedings of Burns in Edinburgh: 'Though he had taken a stride from the furrowed-field into the land of poetry, and abandoned the plough for the harp, he seemed for some days to feel, as in earlier life, unfitted with an aim, and wandered about looking down from Arthur's Seat, surveying the Palace, gazing at the Castle, or contemplating the windows of the booksellers' shops, where he saw all works save the poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman. He found his way to the lowly grave of Fergusson, and kneeling down, kissed the sod; he sought out the house of Allan Ramsay, and on entering it took off his hat; and when he was afterwards introduced to Creech, the bibliopole remembered that he had before heard him inquiring if this had been the shop of the author of the "Gentle Shepherd."'

In the country, during the past summer, Burns had become acquainted with Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, near Ayr—a warm-hearted, high-pulsed man, enthusiastically given to masonry, and an occasional scribbler of verses. As he had been concerned with Provost Ballantyne in masonically laying the foundation-stone of the *new brig*, we may surmise that this kind patron of the bard was the channel through which Burns approached Mr Dalrymple's acquaintance. In the earlier half of the eighteenth century, there had flourished at Ayr a poor 'violer,' named Hugh M'Guire. A friendless lad, named Macrae, to whom he had shewn some kindness, went abroad, rose in the world, and came home as the retired governor of Madras, with a large fortune. Having no family of his own, Governor Macrae, from a feeling of gratitude, adopted that of the violer M'Guire. To the son, who took his name, he gave a large estate. The eldest daughter, with a superb provision, was married by the Earl of Glencairn. The second became the wife of Lord Alva, a judge of the Court of Session. The third was wedded by Hugh Dalrymple, of Orangefield. Thus it happened that the present Earl of Glencairn, Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield,

and a certain hot-headed Captain Macrae of Holmains, all of them distinguished members of society in Edinburgh, were cousins-german through a common descent from the Ayr violer Hugh M'Guire. The daughter of the violer, as Dowager Countess of Glencairn, resided at Coates House, near Edinburgh—a lady noted for her religious zeal in an age not much distinguished that way. A connection, again, had been established between this group of eminent persons and another of equal local eminence, by the recent union of a younger brother of Lord Glencairn to Lady Isabella Erskine, sister to the Earl of Buchan and to the Hon. Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, both of whom were leading members of Edinburgh society. Having, through Mr Dalrymple, the means of introduction to this 'set,' Burns could not be said to enter Edinburgh quite friendless. Lord Glencairn, too—a man in whom singular personal beauty formed the index to one of the fairest of characters—had already been prepared to patronise the Ayrshire poet, in consequence of having had his attention drawn to the Kilmarnock volume by Mr Dalziel, factor on his Ayrshire estate.

It so happened that William Creech, now the leading publisher in Edinburgh, had in early life acted as preceptor to the Earl of Glencairn. The earl was, therefore, well qualified to introduce Burns to his notice, and recommend to him the publication of the proposed second edition of the Poems. Creech, who was a well-educated man, and himself not without literary talents, must have instantly appreciated the genius thus brought under his notice. Apparently, however, he did not at once resolve upon undertaking any risk that might be involved in the proposed edition.

According to a curious record quoted below,[1] Burns was present on the evening of the 7th of December at a meeting of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge of free-masons, at its place of assemblage in St John's Street, and there Mr Dalrymple introduced the bard to the *Past-Master*, the Honourable Henry Erskine. Never was a man more universally beloved in his circle or place of residence than this eminent barrister and highly-gifted man—the witty, genial, kind-hearted Harry Erskine. It is unnecessary to remark, that he was also a man peculiarly disposed to befriend such an example of native genius as Burns. This single lodge-night seems to have been enough to make the poet feel as if Mr Erskine were already his ancient and assured friend.

[1] *A Winter with Robert Burns.* Edinburgh, 1846.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE.

EDINBURGH, *Dec.* 7, 1786.

HONOURED SIR—I have paid every attention to your commands, but can only say, what perhaps you will have heard before this reach you, that Muirkirklands were bought by a John Gordon, W.S., but for whom I know not; Mauchlands, Haugh-Mill, &c., by a Frederick Fotheringham, supposed to be for Ballochmyle Laird; and Adam-Hill and Shawood were bought for Oswald's folks. This is so imperfect an account, and will be so late ere it reach you, that were it not to discharge my conscience, I would not trouble you with it; but after all my diligence, I could make it no sooner nor better.[1]

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inserted among the wonderful events in the Poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacs, along with the Black Monday and the Battle of Bothwell-Bridge.[2] My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man of the world. Through my lord's influence, it is inserted in the records of the Caledonian Hunt that they universally, one and all, subscribe for the second edition. My subscription-bills come out to-morrow, and you shall have some of them next post. I have met in Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield what Solomon emphatically calls 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' The warmth with which he interests himself in my affairs is of the same enthusiastic kind which you, Mr Aiken, and the few patrons that took notice of my earlier poetic days, shewed for the poor unlucky devil of a poet.

I always remember Mrs Hamilton and Miss Kennedy in my poetic prayers, but you both in prose and verse.

May cauld ne'er catch you but a hap,[3]
Nor hunger but in plenty's lap!
Amen! R. B.

Meanwhile, there was other enginery working in favour of the bard. Professor Stewart, on leaving the banks of the Ayr at

[1] The lands of Mauchline Mains, East, West, and South Mossgavil, Haugh-Mill, and some others in Ayrshire, which the Loudon family was at this time forced to part with, are advertised to be sold in the Exchange Coffeehouse, Edinburgh, on the 5th of December. Burns seems to have been commissioned by Mr Gavin Hamilton to send him early intelligence of the result of the sale. The Earl of Loudon had died in the most melancholy manner, the victim of pressing embarrassments, in the preceding April.

[2] What Burns said here, probably more than half, if not wholly in jest, has come to be verified.

[3] Upper-coat.

the beginning of November to commence his winter-session at the university, carried with him a copy of the Kilmarnock volume, which he brought under the notice of Mr Henry Mackenzie, the well-known author of *The Man of Feeling*, and who was now conducting a periodical work, entitled *The Lounger*, published in Edinburgh by Mr Creech. Mr Mackenzie read the poems with the usual admiration, and lost no time in writing upon them a generous critique, which appeared in *The Lounger* for the 9th of December. By this alone the fame of Burns was at once perfected in Scotland, for by the pronouncement of the greatest tribunal in the country, all lesser judges were set free to give their judgment in the direction which their feelings had already dictated.

To Burns the approbation must have been extremely dear, coming as it did from one whose works had been bosom-books to him in his early days, when he could never have indulged the hope of being known to their author. Mackenzie, with great boldness, threw aside all claim for notice to Burns on the score of his humble condition in society. He pronounced him 'a genius of no ordinary rank.' His birth and education might excite wonder at his productions; 'but his poetry, considered abstractedly, and without the apologies arising from his situation, seems to me fully entitled to command our feelings and obtain our applause.' After quoting some stanzas from the *Vision*, and the whole of the *Mountain Daisy*, as specimens of the moral and tender, the critic goes on to say: 'The power of genius is not less admirable in tracing the manners, than in painting the passions, or in drawing the scenery of nature. That intuitive glance with which a writer like Shakspeare discerns the characters of men, with which he catches the many-changing hues of life, forms a sort of problem in the science of mind, of which it is easier to see the truth than to assign the cause. Though I am very far from meaning to compare our rustic bard to Shakspeare, yet whoever will read his lighter and more humorous poems, his Dialogue of the Dogs, his Dedication to G—— H——, Esq., his Epistle to a Young Friend, and to W—— S——, will perceive with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this Heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered station, has looked upon men and manners.'

This, it will be admitted, is no faint praise. But Mr Mackenzie is not satisfied with praising. He sees that a great poet has arisen, and he claims for him the generous support of his country. 'Burns,' he says, 'possesses the spirit as well as the fancy of a

poet. That honest pride and independence of soul, which are sometimes the Muse's only dower, break forth on every occasion in his works. It may be, then, I shall wrong his feelings while I indulge my own, in calling the attention of the public to his situation and circumstances. That condition, humble as it was, in which he found content, and wooed the Muse, might not have been deemed uncomfortable; but grief and misfortune have reached him there; and one or two of his poems hint, what I have learned from some of his countrymen, that he has been obliged to form the resolution of leaving his native land, to seek, under a West Indian clime, that shelter and support which Scotland has denied him. But I trust that means may be found to prevent this resolution from taking place, and that I do my country no more than justice when I suppose her ready to stretch out her hand to cherish and retain this native poet, whose "wood-notes wild" possess so much excellence. To repair the wrongs of suffering or neglected merit—to call forth genius from the obscurity in which it had pined indignant, and place it where it may profit or delight the world—these are exertions which give to wealth an enviable superiority, to greatness and to patronage a laudable pride.'

TO JAMES DALRYMPLE, ESQ., OF ORANGEFIELD.

[*December* 10, 1786?]

DEAR SIR—I suppose the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main* to complete his purposes on you all at once, in making you a poet. I broke open the letter you sent me—hummed over the rhymes—and as I saw they were extempore, said to myself they were very well; but when I saw at the bottom a name that I shall ever value with grateful respect, 'I gapit wide, but nacthing spak.' I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction-bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

I am naturally of a superstitious cast; and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its consciousness, and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My foreboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility; and several events, great in their magnitude, and important in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfall of the conclave, or the crushing of the cork rumps—a ducal-coronet to Lord George Gordon, and the Protestant interest, or St Peter's keys to * * * *.

You want to know how I come on. I am just in *statu quo*, or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, in 'auld use and wont.'

The noble Earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent being whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let the worshipful squire H. L., or the reverend Mass J. M., go into their primitive nothing. At best, they are but ill-digested lumps of chaos—only, one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity, and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at 'the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.'

R. B.

He gives us more of his own story in a letter

TO JOHN BALLANTYNE, ESQ., BANKER, AYR.

EDINBURGH, 13*th December* 1786.

MY HONOURED FRIEND—I would not write you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and my matters, which, by the by, is often no easy task. I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight, and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable headache and stomach-complaint, but am now a good deal better. I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time shall be no more. By his interest it is passed in the 'Caledonian Hunt,' and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition, for which they are to pay one guinea. I have been introduced to a good many of the *noblesse*, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are, the Duchess of Gordon—the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord and Lady Betty[1]—the Dean of Faculty—Sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati: Professors Stewart, Blair, and Mr Mackenzie, the 'Man of Feeling.' An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire Bard with Mr Sibbald, which I got. I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq., brother to the Justice-Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him by invitation at his own house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription-bill or two next post, when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr Aiken. I saw his son to-day, and he is very well.

Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called *The Lounger*, a copy of which I here enclose you. I was, sir, when I was first honoured with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation.

[1] Lady Betty Cunningham, an unmarried sister of the earl.

I shall certainly, my ever-honoured patron, write you an account of my every step; and better health and more spirits may enable me to make it something better than this stupid matter-of-fact epistle. I have the honour to be, good sir, your ever-grateful humble servant, R. B.

If any of my friends write me, my direction is—Care of Mr Creech, Bookseller.

The Caledonian Hunt is a society of the Scottish nobility and gentry, having the sports of the field chiefly in view. The promptitude and liberality of its patronage to Burns have scarcely been sufficiently acknowledged by his biographers. The clever and kind-hearted, but eccentric Jane Duchess of Gordon, was now reigning over fashionable life in Edinburgh. She could well appreciate the poetry of Burns, and she was eager to patronise the man. The promptly-given friendship of Henry Erskine has been already alluded to. By the literary men, generally, Burns was received with the greatest cordiality. We find that, within a month of his arrival, he had been more than once at the hospitable table of Lord Monboddo, who was then remarkable for his classic suppers. Dr Robertson, Dr Blair, Dr Gregory, Dr Adam Ferguson, Mr Mackenzie, and Mr Fraser Tytler, adopted him into their society as readily as if he had been a foreigner of distinguished rank and learning. In this brilliant circle, no object made a greater impression upon his mind than the exquisite beauty and grace of Eliza Burnet, the daughter of Lord Monboddo. On returning from a first visit to his lordship's house, his friend Mr Geddes said: 'Well, and did you admire the young lady?' 'I admired God Almighty more than ever!' said the poet: 'Miss Burnet is the most heavenly of all his works.'[1] To this paragon of female loveliness he makes special allusion in his *Address to Edinburgh*, as rating her among the wonders of the city:—

ADDRESS TO EDINBURGH.

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
  All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
  Sat Legislation's sovereign powers!
From marking wildly-scattered flowers,
  As on the banks of Ayr I strayed,
And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
  I shelter in thy honoured shade.

[1] *Cunningham's Life of Burns.*

Here wealth still swells the golden tide,
  As busy Trade his labour plies;
There Architecture's noble pride
  Bids elegance and splendour rise;
Here Justice, from her native skies,
  High wields her balance and her rod;
There Learning, with his eagle eyes,
  Seeks Science in her coy abode.

Thy sons, Edina! social, kind,
  With open arms the stranger hail;
Their views enlarged, their liberal mind,
  Above the narrow, rural vale;
Attentive still to Sorrow's wail,
  Or modest Merit's silent claim;
And never may their sources fail!
  And never envy blot their name!

Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn,
  Gay as the gilded summer sky,
Sweet as the dewy milk-white thorn,
  Dear as the raptured thrill of joy!
Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
  Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
  And own his work indeed divine!

There, watching high the least alarms,
  Thy rough, rude fortress gleams afar;
Like some bold veteran, gray in arms,
  And marked with many a seamy scar;
The ponderous wall and massy bar,
  Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock;
Have oft withstood assailing war,
  And oft repelled the invader's shock.

With awe-struck thought, and pitying tears,
  I view that noble, stately dome,
Where Scotia's kings of other years,
  Famed heroes! had their royal home:
Alas, how changed the times to come!
  Their royal name low in the dust!
Their hapless race wild wandering roam,
  Though rigid law cries out, 'Twas just!

Wild beats my heart to trace your steps,
  Whose ancestors, in days of yore,
Through hostile ranks and ruined gaps
  Old Scotia's bloody lion bore:

Even I who sing in rustic lore,
  Haply, my sires have left their shed,
And faced grim danger's loudest roar,
  Bold-following where your fathers led!

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
  All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
  Sat Legislation's sovereign powers!
From marking wildly-scattered flowers,
  As on the banks of Ayr I strayed,
And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
  I shelter in thy honoured shade.

Notwithstanding the strong interest awakened in Burns so soon after his arrival in Edinburgh, and the high patronage exerted in his favour, it appears that he did not just at once overleap all the difficulties with respect to his proposed second edition which had obstructed his course in the country.

The late Mr John Moir, printer, used to relate that he was then serving his apprenticeship with an eminent typographer in the High Street. One day a plain-looking man, of rustic exterior, who afterwards proved to be Robert Burns, came to inquire about the printing of a volume of poems. Unluckily, the master looked upon his visitor as only some poor crack-brained versifier, who might give him a good deal of trouble, but was not likely to yield much solid return in the way of business. He therefore received the application with marked coldness; spoke of being a good deal engaged at present; and of his habit of requiring effective guarantees of payment from any strangers for whom he worked. The visitor, manifestly offended, went away, but not till he had taken occasion to pull out and shew a quantity of money sufficient to convince the printer that, if more favourably received, he might have proved a good customer in all desirable senses. This was not an end of the typographer's mortifications; for, being vexed at missing so good a job as the printing of Burns's poems, he resolved to lose no second customer of that sort who might come in his way, and he accordingly took the risk, soon after, of printing the productions of a rustic bard from Aberdeenshire, which, however, proving a complete failure, he lost fully as much by the one concern as he could have expected to gain by the other.

TO MR WILLIAM CHALMERS, WRITER, AYR.

EDINBURGH, *December* 27, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I confess I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner; but of all men living, I had intended to have sent you an entertaining letter; and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding conceited majesty preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily-solemn oath this!—I am and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humour as to write a commentary on the Revelation of St John the Divine, who was banished to the Isle of Patmos by the cruel and bloody Domitian, son to Vespasian, and brother to Titus, both emperors of Rome, and who was himself an emperor, and raised the second or third persecution, I forget which, against the Christians, and after throwing the said Apostle John, brother to the Apostle James, commonly called James the Greater, to distinguish him from another James, who was on some account or other known by the name of James the Less—after throwing him into a caldron of boiling oil, from which he was miraculously preserved, he banished the poor son of Zebedee to a desert island in the Archipelago, where he was gifted with the second-sight, and saw as many wild beasts as I have seen since I came to Edinburgh; which, a circumstance not very uncommon in story-telling, brings me back to where I set out.

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I passed Glenbuck.

One blank in the *Address to Edinburgh*—'Fair B——,' is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been anything nearly like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

My direction is—Care of Andrew Bruce, Merchant, Bridge Street. R. B.

While spending his evenings with beauty, rank, and talent, Burns continued content with the share of John Richmond's room and bed.[1] John helped him to transcribe his poems for the press, and

[1] 'In the first stair on the left hand, on entering the close [Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket], and on the first floor of the house, is the poet's lodging. The tradition of his residence there has passed through very few hands—the predecessor of the present tenant having learned it from Mrs Carfrae [Richmond's landlady], and the poet's room is pointed out with its window looking into Lady Stair's Close. The land is an ancient and very substantial building, with large and neatly-moulded windows, retaining the marks of having been finished with stone mullions. . . . . From this ancient dwelling Burns issued to dine or sup with the magnates of the land. . . . . The poet's lodging is a large and well-proportioned room, neatly panelled with wood, according to a fashion then by no means antiquated.'—*Wilson's Memorials of Edinburgh* (4to, 1848), vol. i. p. 166.

when he came in at night, jaded and excited, would read to him till he fell asleep. Richmond testified that he kept good hours, and observed the rules of sobriety. After a brief residence in town, his plain rustic garb gave way to a suit of blue and buff, the livery of Mr Fox, with buckskins and top-boots. He continued to wear his hair tied behind, and spread upon his forehead, but without the powder which was then nearly universal. On the whole, his appearance was modest and becoming. It was remarked that he shewed no sign of embarrassment in refined society, and that he took his part in conversation with freedom and energy, but without the least forwardness. The literati were surprised to find in what pure English, and with how much eloquence, he could express his ideas, and how glowing and brilliant these ideas often were. Principal Robertson declared that he had 'scarcely ever met with any man whose conversation displayed greater vigour than that of Burns.'[1] His poems had, he acknowledged, surprised him; his prose compositions appeared even more wonderful; but the conversation was a marvel beyond all. We are thus left to understand that the best of Burns has not been, and was not of a nature to be, transmitted to posterity.

Dr Currie mentions a fact as occurring at the close of 1787, which we must place a whole year earlier, for a reason which will, we trust, appear sufficient.[2] 'It appears,' he says, 'that on the 31st December he attended a meeting to celebrate the birthday of the lineal descendant of the Scottish race of kings, the late unfortunate Prince Charles Edward.' We have Burns's own authority for saying, that Jacobitism was not a deep feeling in his mind. It was, nevertheless, a sentiment which he at this time took no pains to conceal. See a passage in the *Address to Edinburgh*, composed during this very month, and soon after published. A romantic feeling regarding his country, and its ancient independent condition, an antipathy towards the representatives of the old religious Whigs of Scotland, a sympathy springing from his own circumstances with all that was depressed by or in opposition to fortune—perhaps a shade of manly impatience with the cant of loyalty, as indulged in at that day—appear to have combined, with some notion about his own ancestral history, to throw Burns into

[1] *Heron's Life of Burns.*

[2] The reason is, that, on the 31st December 1787, Burns was confined to his room with a bruised limb, therefore could not have attended any convivial meeting on that day. Before any subsequent 31st of December, Prince Charles Edward, whose birthday occasioned the meeting, was no more, and Burns had ceased to live in Edinburgh.

this vain and insubstantial profession. Charles Edward was still alive, but lost in the sottishness which so sadly fell upon a mind once ardent and apparently capable of better things.[1] A few generous souls, perhaps none of them of very high standing in society, kept his memory alive by an annual symposium on his birthday. On the present occasion, they were favoured with the attendance of Burns in the capacity of their poet-laureate; and he accordingly produced an ode, of which Dr Currie has preserved a few stanzas:

* * * *

False flatterer, Hope, away![2]
Nor think to lure us as in days of yore;
We solemnise this sorrowing natal-day
To prove our loyal truth; we can no more;
And owning Heaven's mysterious sway,
Submissive low adore.

Ye honoured mighty dead!
Who nobly perished in the glorious cause,
Your king, your country, and her laws!
From great Dundee who smiling victory led,
And fell a martyr in her arms
(What breast of northern ice but warms?)
To bold Balmerino's undying name,
Whose soul of fire, lighted at heaven's high flame,
Deserves the proudest wreath departed heroes claim.

Nor unavenged your fate shall be,
It only lags the fatal hour;
Your blood shall with incessant cry
Awake at last th' unsparing power;
As from the cliff, with thundering course,
The snowy ruin smokes along,
With doubling speed and gathering force,
Till deep it crashing whelms the cottage in the vale!

So vengeance * * * * *

[1] To go no further, the magnanimity of the Prince in 1745 towards all of his enemies who fell in his power, forms a bright point in his character, and one to which full justice has never yet been done in public opinion.

[2] 'In the first part of this ode there is some beautiful imagery, which the poet afterwards interwove in the *Chevalier's Lament*.'—CURRIE.

TO MISS LOGAN, WITH BEATTIE'S POEMS:

AS A NEW-YEAR'S GIFT, JANUARY 1, 1787.[1]

Again the silent wheels of time
  Their annual round have driven,
And you, though scarce in maiden prime,
  Are so much nearer heaven.

No gifts have I from Indian coasts
  The infant year to hail;
I send you more than India boasts
  In Edwin's simple tale.

Our sex with guile and faithless love
  Is charged, perhaps, too true;
But may, dear maid, each lover prove
  An Edwin still to you!

Mrs Dunlop had written to Dr John Moore, author of *Zeluco*, regarding Burns and his verse, and this amiable man had taken an opportunity of pointing out to the Earl of Eglintoun what a miracle of genius had risen in his county, and was now claiming the friendly patronage of all good Scotsmen. The earl immediately sent a gentleman to Burns, to bespeak the new edition of his poems, and hand him a suitable gift of money.

TO THE EARL OF EGLINTOUN.

[EDINBURGH, *January* 11, 1787.]

MY LORD—As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted ideas of a citizen of the world, but have all those national prejudices which I believe glow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotchman. There is scarcely anything to which I am so feelingly alive as the honour and welfare of my country; and as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished, though, till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy, then, to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your lordship. Your munificence, my lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgments; but

[1] Sister of Major Logan, to whom the poet had addressed an epistle on the 30th October of the past year.

your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude, I hope, I am incapable of; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have so much honest pride as to detest. R. B.

TO MR MACKENZIE, SURGEON, MAUCHLINE.

EDINBURGH, 11*th January* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—Yours gave me something like the pleasure of an old friend's face. I saw *your* friend and *my* honoured patron, Sir John Whitefoord, just after I received your letter, and gave him your respectful compliments. He was pleased to say many handsome things of you, which I heard with the more satisfaction, as I knew them to be just.

His son John, who calls very frequently on me, is in a fuss to-day like a coronation. This is the great day—the assembly and ball of the Caledonian Hunt; and John has had the good-luck to pre-engage the hand of the beauty-famed and wealth-celebrated Miss M'Adam, our countrywoman. Between friends, John is desperately in for it there, and I am afraid will be desperate indeed.

I am sorry to send you the last speech and dying words of *The Lounger*.

A gentleman waited on me yesterday, and gave me, by Lord Eglintoun's order, ten guineas by way of subscription for a brace of copies of my second edition.

I met with Lord Maitland[1] and a brother of his to-day at breakfast. They are exceedingly easy, accessible, agreeable fellows, and seemingly pretty clever. I am ever, my dear sir, yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

TO JOHN BALLANTYNE, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, *January* 14, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND—It gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie Gaw's Skate—'past redemption;'[2] for I have still this favourable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teases me eternally till I do it.

[1] Afterwards eighth Earl of Lauderdale; at this time a conspicuous member of the House of Commons, on the side of Opposition.

[2] This is one of a great number of old saws which Burns, when a lad, had picked up from his mother, who had a vast collection of such fragments of traditionary humour and wisdom.—CROMEK.

[illegible] immunity. My [illegible] with me about [illegible] which [illegible] ministering [illegible] that in my [illegible] and though [illegible] me. in his [illegible] to take [illegible] promised to meet Mr [illegible]

[illegible] Worshipful Grand-Master [illegible] of Scotland [illegible] the different [illegible] The Grand Master [illegible] himself as a [illegible] Caledonia [illegible] through the whole assembly [illegible] acclamations. [illegible] I was downright thunderstruck, and [illegible] made the best return [illegible] grand officers said [illegible] "Very well indeed" [illegible]

[illegible] best good-wishes [illegible] I am ever [illegible] much indebted humble servant. R. B.

[illegible] Dr John Moore [illegible] —

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] this moment [illegible] neglect. I [illegible] as a fib. I [illegible] but [illegible] the idea, [illegible] yet I [illegible] character, and I [illegible] a more [illegible] disgracing [illegible] I have [illegible] The View of [illegible] every artery [illegible] at the thought. I [illegible] to him to-morrow or next day. His kind [illegible] behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on

the part of Lord Eglintoun, with ten guineas, by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thomson; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the literati here, who honour me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed anything on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print, and the enclosed, which I will print in this edition.[1] You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my *Vision* long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle, of which the additional stanzas are a part as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the 'saviour of his country,' which, sooner or later, I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is, and has been, the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice which has borne me to a height where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede perhaps as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all, to disburden my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But,

When proud Fortune's ebbing tide recedes,

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time when

[1] Stanzas in *The Vision*, beginning, 'By stately tower or palace fair,' and ending with the first Duan.

the blow of calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph.

Your patronising me, and interesting yourself in my fame and character as a poet, I rejoice in—it exalts me in my own idea—and whether you can or can not aid me in my subscription, is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription-bill any charms to the heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace! R. B.

TO DR MOORE.

EDINBURGH [*January 16th or 17th?*] 1787.

SIR—Mrs Dunlop has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honour of noticing him and his works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solicitudes of authorship, can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such a manner by judges of the first character. Your criticisms, sir, I receive with reverence; only I am sorry they mostly come too late; a peccant passage or two that I would certainly have altered, were gone to the press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greatest part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit, that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still, I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had; and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttleton and Collins described the heart—I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame. R. B.

To this letter Dr Moore sent the following answer:—

CLIFFORD STREET, *January* 23, 1787.

SIR—I have just received your letter, by which I find I have reason to complain of my friend Mrs Dunlop, for transmitting to you extracts from my letters to her, by much too freely and too carelessly written for your perusal. I must forgive her, however, in consideration of her good intention, as you will forgive me, I hope, for the freedom I use with certain expressions, in consideration of my admiration of the poems in general. If I may judge of the

author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the irritable temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their own number, whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease and curious felicity of expression. Indeed the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scattered, are not all I admire in your works; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favourable impression of the poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would have been my seeing the author last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years.

I rejoice very sincerely at the encouragement you receive at Edinburgh, and I think you particularly fortunate in the patronage of Dr Blair, who, I am informed, interests himself very much for you. I beg to be remembered to him; nobody can have a warmer regard for that gentleman than I have, which, independent of the worth of his character, would be kept alive by the memory of our common friend, the late Mr George B[annatyn]e.

Before I received your letter, I sent, enclosed in a letter to ——, a sonnet by Miss Williams, a young poetical lady,[1] which she wrote on reading your *Mountain Daisy;* perhaps it may not displease you:—

'While soon "the garden's flaunting flowers" decay,
And scattered on the earth neglected lie,
The "Mountain Daisy," cherished by the ray
A poet drew from Heaven, shall never die.
Ah! like that lonely flower the poet rose,
'Mid Penury's bare soil and bitter gale;
He felt each storm that on the mountain blows,
Nor ever knew the shelter of the vale.
By Genius in her native vigour nurst,
On Nature with impassioned look he gazed;
Then through the cloud of adverse fortune burst
Indignant, and in light unborrowed blazed.
Scotia! from rude affliction shield thy bard;
His heaven-taught numbers Fame herself will guard.'

I have been trying to add to the number of your subscribers, but find that many of my acquaintance are already among them. I have only to add, that, with every sentiment of esteem, and the most cordial good wishes, I am, your obedient humble servant,

J. MOORE.

Burns, in his letter of 15th January to Mrs Dunlop, speaks of additional stanzas of *The Vision,* of which he was to publish only

[1] Miss Helen Maria Williams was a notable contributor to popular literature at that time and for many years later.

a part in the new edition. I have seen a copy in the bard's handwriting of the entire poem as it had then stood. It is a curious and valuable document, but for an unexpected reason—namely, its proving, what might otherwise have been doubted, that Burns was not incapable of writing weakly. The whole of the inedited stanzas are strikingly of this character. Most of them are panegyrical of country gentlefolks who had shewn him some degree of kindness, or whose ancestral history interested him. Perhaps there is, after all, a second and a greater importance in the document, as shewing how, with the capability to write ineffectively, his taste was so unerring as to prevent him from publishing a single line that was not fitted to command respect, for every one of the poor stanzas has been thrown out on his sending the poem to the press.[1]

TO JOHN BALLANTYNE, ESQ.

[*January* 1787.][2]

While here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By Heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound, auld toon o' Ayr, conjured up, I will send my last song to Mr Ballantyne. Here it is—

[BONNIE DOON.]

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,
  How can ye bloom sae fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
  And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou 'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
  That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
  When my fause luve was true.

Thou 'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
  That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
  And wistna o' my fate.

[1] See Appendix, No. 11.

[2] This date is given on conjecture by Allan Cunningham; it is probably very near the truth.

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,
  To see the woodbine twine,
And ilka bird sang o' its love:
  And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
  Frae aff its thorny tree;
And my fause luver staw the rose,
  But left the thorn wi' me.[1]

This song referred to the same unhappy love-tale, which had been the subject of conversation at Mr Lawrie's table some months previously. Burns then took an unfavourable view of the conduct of the young lady, but he had now learned to look upon it with the tenderness and pity which alone could make it a fit subject for verse. The heroine was a member of a most respectable family, and ultimately became heiress of her father's estate in Carrick. I am afraid that a full recital of the circumstances would leave the reader little choice between the opinion of Burns as a man of the world and Burns as a poet. It may only be remarked, in behalf of the lady, that her errors commenced in the years of youth and inexperience, and under circumstances that might have been expected to protect her from such evil. Captain M., her lover, was the son of a wealthy Wigtonshire proprietor, and though only twenty-five years of age, representative of his county in parliament. Although now, at the distance of two years from the commencement of their intimacy, we find a ballad from the pen of Burns bewailing the falsehood of the lover, it does not really appear that any charge of this kind could be brought against him. Certain it also is, that the connection was not finally broken off till after the birth of an infant in 1794, when at length the unfortunate lady instituted a declarator of marriage and legitimacy in behalf of herself and child in the Consistorial Court, with a subsidiary conclusion for damages in case of failure. She died not long after, probably the victim of anguished feelings; but the process went on in behalf of her infant. The consistorial judges pronounced in 1798 for the marriage of the pair, and the consequent legitimacy of the child; but the Court of Session, on review, reversed this judgment, with an order for the payment of £3000 to the daughter.[2] Upon the whole, this story

[1] Another copy of this song, considerably altered, is afterwards introduced.

[2] The case is detailed in *Fergusson's Consistorial Law Reports.*

does not breathe the present tone of British aristocratic society, and one cannot help believing it to be characteristic of its own age—one in which, in several respects, there seems to have been a momentary retrogression towards the licentiousness of a well-known period in the preceding century.

What has been previously advanced as to Dr Blacklock's letter to Mr Lawrie having only been partially the means of bringing Burns to Edinburgh, is supported by the fact, that Burns allowed several weeks to elapse before he saw the blind poet. About the 11th or 12th of December, Blacklock wrote to Mr Lawrie, to recommend that Mackenzie's criticism should be prefixed to the new edition of the Poems, instead of his letter of the 4th September, which had all the disadvantages of an extempore effusion. He added: 'By the by, I hear that Mr Burns is, and has been, some time in Edinburgh. These news I am sorry to have heard at second-hand; they would have come much more welcome from the bard's own mouth. I have, however, written to Mr Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, to beg the favour that he would bring us together.'[1] On Friday, the 22d December, Mr Lawrie informed Burns that he had last week had a letter from Dr Blacklock, expressing a desire to see the Ayrshire Ploughman. 'I write this to you,' says Lawrie, 'that you may lose no time in waiting upon him, should you not yet have seen him.'[2] The excellent minister of Loudon adds some advice on the score of a modest diffidence and an invincible temperance, as necessary to sustain him in the new scenes into which he had been so suddenly introduced. Burns appears to have now hastened to visit Blacklock; yet he allows several weeks to elapse before answering Mr Lawrie's letter—also a fact speaking somewhat for the view we take of the immediately-prompting causes of the poet's migration from Ayrshire:—

TO THE REV. G. LAWRIE,

NEWMILLS, NEAR KILMARNOCK.

EDINBURGH, *February* 5, 1787.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—When I look at the date of your kind letter, my heart reproaches me severely with ingratitude in neglecting so long to answer it. I will not trouble you with any account, by way of apology, of my hurried life and distracted attention; do me the justice to believe that my delay by no

[1] From the original in possession of the Rev. Mr Balfour Graham, North Berwick.

[2] Currie's edition. General Correspondence, No. xii.

means proceeded from want of respect. I feel, and ever shall feel for you, the mingled sentiments of esteem for a friend, and reverence for a father.

I thank you, sir, with all my soul for your friendly hints, though I do not need them so much as my friends are apt to imagine. You are dazzled with newspaper accounts and distant reports; but in reality I have no great temptation to be intoxicated with the cup of prosperity. Novelty may attract the attention of mankind awhile; to it I owe my present éclat; but I see the time not far distant when the popular tide which has borne me to a height of which I am perhaps unworthy, shall recede with silent celerity, and leave me a barren waste of sand, to descend at my leisure to my former station. I do not say this in the affectation of modesty: I see the consequence is unavoidable, and am prepared for it. I had been at a good deal of pains to form a just, impartial estimate of my intellectual powers before I came here; I have not added, since I came to Edinburgh, anything to the account; and I trust I shall take every atom of it back to my shades, the coverts of my unnoticed early years.

In Dr Blacklock, whom I see very often, I have found what I would have expected in our friend—a clear head and an excellent heart.

By far the most agreeable hours I spend in Edinburgh must be placed to the account of Miss Lawrie and her pianoforte. I cannot help repeating to you and Mrs Lawrie a compliment that Mr Mackenzie, the celebrated Man of Feeling, paid to Miss Lawrie the other night at the concert. I had come in at the interlude, and sat down by him till I saw Miss Lawrie in a seat not very far distant, and went up to pay my respects to her. On my return to Mr Mackenzie, he asked me who she was: I told him 'twas the daughter of a reverend friend of mine in the west country. He returned, there was something very striking, to his idea, in her appearance. On my desiring to know what it was, he was pleased to say: 'She has a great deal of the elegance of a well-bred lady about her, with all the sweet simplicity of a country-girl.'

My compliments to all the happy inmates of St Margaret's. I am, my dear sir, yours most gratefully,

ROBERT BURNS.

The Earl of Buchan was a very different person from his brother, Henry Erskine. With weak parts, he was continually led by vanity into conspicuous situations: above all, he delighted to be a patron, though penurious habits often raised a ludicrous contrast between his pretensions and his performances. He had (apparently on the 1st of February) sent Burns some of those advices which he thought his rank entitled him to offer to a person in the

situation of the Ayrshire Ploughman. Burns returned the following temperate and prudent answer:—

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

My Lord—The honour your lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember—

Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,
They best can give it who deserve it most.

Your lordship touches the darling chord of my heart, when you advise me to fire my Muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my lord, in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom, strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic words:

'I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes, merely to give you pain: I wish through these wounds to imprint a lasting lesson on your heart. I will not mention how many of my salutary advices you have despised; I have given you line upon line, and precept upon precept; and while I was chalking out to you the straight way to wealth and character, with audacious effrontery you have zigzagged across the path, contemning me to my face. You know the consequences. It is not yet three months since home was so hot for you, that you were on the wing for the western shore of the Atlantic, not to make a fortune, but to hide your misfortune.

'Now, that your dear-loved Scotia puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these Will-o'-wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from the veriest poverty; but still it is half a step from it. If all that I can urge be ineffectual, let her who seldom calls to you in vain, let the call of pride, prevail with you. You know how you feel at the iron gripe of ruthless oppression: you know how you bear the galling sneer of contumelious greatness. I hold you out the conveniences, the comforts of life, independence, and character, on the one hand; I tender you servility, dependence, and wretchedness on the other. I will not insult your understanding by bidding you make a choice.'

This, my lord, is unanswerable. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic Muse in my wonted way, at the plough-tail. Still, my lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude

to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons who have honoured me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times, as now, draw forth the swelling tear. R. B.

During the first blaze of Burns's reputation in Edinburgh, several rhyming epistles were addressed to him publicly and privately—generally of no other value than to shew how immensely he had stepped beyond all common bounds of success in cultivating the rustic Muse. One, however, from a Mrs Scott of Wauchope, in Roxburghshire, was neatly and effectively written, and to it Burns made a suitable reply.

THE GUDEWIFE OF WAUCHOPE-HOUSE TO BURNS.

My cantie, witty, rhyming ploughman,
I hafflins doubt it is na true, man,
That ye between the stilts was bred,
Wi' ploughmen schooled, wi' ploughmen fed;
I doubt it sair, ye 've drawn your knowledge
Either frae grammar-school or college.
Guid troth, your saul and body baith
War better fed, I 'd gie my aith,
Than theirs who sup sour milk and parritch,
And bummil through the single Carritch. Catechism
Whaever heard the ploughman speak,
Could tell gif Homer was a Greek?
He 'd flee as soon upon a cudgel,
As get a single line of Virgil.
And then sae slee ye crack your jokes
O' Willie Pitt and Charlie Fox:
Our great men a' sae weel descrive,
And how to gar the nation thrive,
Ane maist wad swear ye dwalt amang them,
And as ye saw them, sae ye sang them.
But be ye ploughman, be ye peer,
Ye are a funny blade, I swear;
And though the cauld I ill can bide, endure
Yet twenty miles and mair I 'd ride
O'er moss and moor, and never grumble,
Though my auld yad should gie a stumble, horse
To crack a winter night wi' thee,
And hear thy sangs and sonnets slee.
Oh gif I kenn'd but whare ye baide, resided
I 'd send to you a marled plaid;

'Twad haud your shouthers warm and braw,
And douce at kirk or market shaw;
Fra' south as weel as north, my lad,
A' honest Scotsmen lo'e the maud.

BURNS TO THE GUDEWIFE OF WAUCHOPE-HOUSE.

I mind it weel in early date,
When I was beardless, young, and blate, bashful
And first could thrash the barn;
Or haud a yokin' at the pleugh;
And though forfoughten sair eneugh, fatigued
Yet unco proud to learn:
When first among the yellow corn
A man I reckoned was,
And wi' the lave ilk merry morn
Could rank my rig and lass,
Still shearing, and clearing,
The tither stookèd raw,
Wi' claivers, and haivers, talk
Wearing the day awa'.

E'en then, a wish, I mind its power—
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast—
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or beuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least.
The rough burr-thissle, spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turned the weeder-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear:
No nation, no station,
My envy e'er could raise,
A Scot still, but blot still,
I knew nae higher praise.

But still the elements o' sang
In formless jumble, right and wrang,
Wild floated in my brain;
Till on that har'st I said before,
My partner in the merry core,
She roused the forming strain;
I see her yet, the sonsie quean,
That lighted up my jingle,
Her witching smile, her pauky een
That gart my heart-strings tingle:

I firèd, inspirèd,
At every kindling keek,
But bashing, and dashing,
I fearèd aye to speak.

Health to the sex, ilk guid chiel says,
Wi' merry dance in winter days,
And we to share in common:
The gust o' joy, the balm of wo,
The saul o' life, the heaven below,
Is rapture-giving woman.
Ye surly sumphs, who hate the name, fools
Be mindfu' o' your mither;
She, honest woman, may think shame
That ye 're connected with her.
Ye 're wae men, ye 're nae men woful
That slight the lovely dears;
To shame ye, disclaim ye,
Ilk honest birkie swears. fellow

For you, no bred to barn and byre,
Wha sweetly tune the Scottish lyre,
Thanks to you for your line:
The marled plaid ye kindly spare,
By me should gratefully be ware; worn
'Twad please me to the nine.
I'd be mair vauntie o' my hap,
Douce hingin' owre my curple, rump
Than ony ermine ever lap,
Or proud imperial purple.
Fareweel then, lang heal then,
And plenty be your fa',
May losses and crosses
Ne'er at your hallan ca'! door

Meanwhile the preparation of the new edition was going rapidly on in the printing-office of William Smellie—a man who, like Creech, mingled literary labours with those attending one of the trades of literature. There was a vast fund of knowledge, shrewdness, and talent, under the rude exterior of Smellie. In his office, at the foot of the Anchor Close, he had done typographic duty for Gilbert Stuart, Robert Fergusson, Dr Robertson, Hugo Arnot, Adam Smith, and many others of the recent and living literati of Scotland, all of whom had been his personal friends. His son Alexander, who lately died at an advanced age, perfectly remembered the visits of the Ayrshire Ploughman to the composing-room, along which he would walk three or four times, cracking a

whip which he carried, to the no small surprise of the men. He paid no attention to his own *copy* under their hands, but looked at any other which he saw lying on the cases. One day he asked a man how many languages he was acquainted with. 'Indeed, sir,' replied the man, 'I've enough ado wi' my *ain*.' Burns remarked that behind there was one of his companions setting up a Gaelic Bible, and another composing from a Hebrew Grammar. 'These two,' said the compositor, 'are the greatest dolts in the house.' Burns seemed amused by the remark, and said he would take a note of it.

Mr Alexander Smellie also communicated the following anecdote:—'There was a particular stool in the office which Burns uniformly occupied while correcting his proof-sheets; as he would not sit on any other, it always bore the name of Burns's Stool. It is still (1844) in the office, and in the same situation where it was when Burns sat on it. At this time Sir John Dalrymple was printing in Mr Smellie's office an *Essay on the Properties of Coal Tar*. One day it happened that Sir John occupied the stool when Burns came into the correcting-room looking for his favourite seat. It was known that what Burns wanted was the stool; but before saying anything to Sir John on the subject, Burns was requested to walk into the composing-room. The opportunity was taken in his absence to request of Sir John to indulge the bard with his favourite seat, but without mentioning his name. Sir John said: "I will not give up my seat to yon impudent staring fellow." Upon which it was replied: "Do you not know that that staring fellow, as you call him, is Burns the poet?" Sir John instantly left the stool, exclaiming: "Good gracious! Give him all the seats in your house!" Burns was then called in, took possession of his stool, and commenced the reading of his proofs.'

Burns was introduced by his printer to one of those convivial clubs composed of men of good condition which then abounded in Edinburgh, each usually founded upon some whim or conceit which shone through all its proceedings. The club in question assumed the name of the Crochallan Fencibles, from a composite cause. Its landlord Douglas was noted for singing a beautiful Gaelic song called *Crochallan* (properly, *Cro Chalein*—that is, Colin's Cattle). This, with the raising of fencible regiments going on at the time to protect the country while the army was chiefly engaged in fighting the American colonists, had given the convivial society an appellation. It was customary to subject a new entrant to a severe ordeal of raillery, by way of proving his

temper, and Burns acknowledged that on that happening to himself, he had been 'thrashed' in a style beyond all his experience. Here Burns met several of the men whose acquaintance he had previously made at the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, particularly one William Dunbar, an uncommonly merry uproarious good fellow, who in the hours of mirthful relaxation appeared as *Colonel of the Crochallans,* but in the moments of daylight sobriety, practised as a douce writer to the Signet, from which position he ultimately stepped up to the dignity of Inspector-general of Stamp-duties for Scotland. Smellie has been thus described by Burns :—

——————— To Crochallan came,
The old cocked-hat, the gray surtout, the same;
His bristling beard just rising in its might;
'Twas four long nights and days till shaving-night;
His uncombed grizzly locks, wild staring, thatched
A head for thought profound and clear unmatched;
Yet though his caustic wit was biting rude,
His heart was warm, benevolent, and good.

He commemorated Willie Dunbar in verses of a different strain. There was an old rough Border ditty referring to a certain *Rattling, Roaring Willie,* of great celebrity in his day as a wandering violer. To this Burns added a stanza, which we are to take as a picture of the Colonel in his place of command and moment of highest exaltation :—

As I cam by Crochallan,
I cannilie keekit ben; looked in
Rattlin', roarin' Willie
Was sitting at yon boord-en';
Sitting at yon boord-en',
And amang gude companie;
Rattlin', roarin' Willie,
Ye 're welcome hame to me!

Dunbar is elsewhere certified by Burns as 'one of the worthiest fellows in the world.' He gave the poet a copy of Spenser as a present, and was thus the means of introducing him to one of the most abundant fountains of poetical imagery which exists in our national literature.

At this time a portrait of the poet was in preparation for the adornment of the forthcoming volume. There was at that time no such thing in the Scottish capital as a portrait-painter of reputation. Creech, however, was acquainted with a young landscape-painter, named Alexander Nasmyth, whom he thought likely to

produce a tolerable representation of the human face divine, if he could be induced to try. He, accordingly, brought Nasmyth to his house to breakfast with Burns, calculating that he would be inspired with such an interest in the bard as would dispose him to exert his best abilities in putting his physiognomy on canvas. The result was as he anticipated. Our poet was soon in due attendance at the artist's lodgings in Wardrop's Court. Nasmyth worked *con amore*, and having attained a certain point at which he thought the likeness good, stopped there, so that the painting was never finished. It is believed that he generously refused to accept any remuneration for his work.[1] An engraver named Beugo, much cleverer in his art than any man residing in Edinburgh till a comparatively recent period, transferred the likeness to copper on the same terms. He took the greatest possible pains with the face, having the poet to sit to himself several times when it was finishing, and the result was a likeness which, notwithstanding a criticism passed on it by Sir Walter Scott, as will be afterwards noted, must undoubtedly be regarded as that on which the friends of Burns have set their stamp of approbation as the most faithful in existence, not even excepting Mr Nasmyth's original.[2]

It has been remembered that, after the sittings for that original, Mr Nasmyth and the poet would take a ramble together, not unfrequently to the King's Park, where Burns delighted to climb Arthur's Seat, and lying on the summit, gaze at its grand panorama of twelve of the principal Scottish counties. Having one night transgressed the rules of sobriety, and sat up till an early hour in the morning, they agreed not to go home at all, but commence an excursion to the Pentland Hills. Passing a cottage a few miles out of town, they heard a frightful noise within, and going up to learn what was the matter, found that the sounds proceeded from a poor man whose reason had given way. Mr Nasmyth used afterwards to describe in thrilling terms the appalling exclamations of the lunatic, and the effect which they had upon Burns.[3] The two friends afterwards continued their walk

[1] At a late period of life, Mr Nasmyth was induced, by the intervention of the present editor, to prepare a full-length sketch of Burns, from memory, for *Mr Lockhart's Life of Burns*, in which it was accordingly published.

[2] 'I used to think Beugo's engraving from Nasmyth's picture shewed more character and expression than the picture itself; but it was the first likeness of my brother I had seen, not having seen the picture till long after, and perhaps the impression then made upon my mind may have made me partial to the engraving.'—*Gilbert Burns to George Thomson, July* 2, 1821.

[3] These particulars are obligingly communicated by James Nasmyth, Esq., of Patricroft, near Manchester, son of the painter.

to the hills, had a fine morning-ramble, and having thus cleared off the effects of their dissipation, came down to Roslin to breakfast. Burns, who was now extremely hungry, found in Mrs David Wilson's little inn such ample solacement, that in a fit of gratitude he scrawled a couple of verses on the reverse side of a wooden platter:—

My blessings on ye, honest wife,
  I ne'er was here before;
Ye 've wealth o' gear for spoon and knife—
  Heart could not wish for more.

Heaven keep you clear of sturt and strife,
  Till far ayont fourscore,
And by the Lord o' death and life,
  I 'll ne'er gae by your door![1]

TO DR MOORE.

EDINBURGH, 15*th February* 1787.

SIR—Pardon my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honour you have done me in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast anything higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment; but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit, I do not deny; but I see with frequent wringings of heart that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss Williams has done me, please, sir, return her in my name my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which, for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore: there are, I think, two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, sombre tenderness of 'time-settled sorrow.'

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why. R. B.

[1] Information derived many years ago from the late Mr Matthew Stobie, Kirklandhill, Haddingtonshire, who lived in Roslin at the time.

The answer of Dr Moore to the foregoing was as follows:—

CLIFFORD STREET, 26th *February* 1787.

DEAR SIR—Your letter of the 15th gave me a great deal of pleasure. It is not surprising that you improve in correctness and taste, considering where you have been for some time past. And I dare swear there is no danger of your admitting any polish which might weaken the vigour of your native powers.

I am glad to perceive that you disdain the nauseous affectation of decrying your own merit as a poet, an affectation which is displayed with most ostentation by those who have the greatest share of self-conceit, and which only adds undeceiving falsehood to disgusting vanity. For you to deny the merit of your poems, would be arraigning the fixed opinion of the public.

As the new edition of my *View of Society* is not yet ready, I have sent you the former edition, which I beg you will accept as a small mark of my esteem. It is sent by sea to the care of Mr Creech; and, along with these four volumes for yourself, I have also sent my *Medical Sketches*, in one volume, for my friend Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop; this you will be so obliging as to transmit, or, if you chance to pass soon by Dunlop, to give to her.

I am happy to hear that your subscription is so ample, and shall rejoice at every piece of good-fortune that befalls you: for you are a very great favourite in my family; and this is a higher compliment than perhaps you are aware of. It includes almost all the professions, and is of course a proof that your writings are adapted to various tastes and situations. My youngest son, who is at Winchester school, writes to me that he is translating some stanzas of your *Halloween* into Latin verse for the benefit of his comrades. This union of taste partly proceeds no doubt from the cement of Scottish partiality with which they are all somewhat tinctured. Even your translator, who left Scotland too early in life for recollection, is not without it. I remain, with great sincerity, your obedient servant, J. MOORE.

TO JOHN BALLANTYNE, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, *Feb.* 24, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND—I will soon be with you now, in guid black prent—in a week, or ten days at furthest. I am obliged, against my own wish, to print subscribers' names; so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription-bills, they must be sent into Creech directly. I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver, and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my book, looking, like all other *fools*, to my title-page. R. B.

Before this time Burns had gratified his own generous feelings by an act of piety towards his unfortunate precursor Fergusson.

The first step he took in the matter is fully expressed in an excerpt from the session-records of the parish of Canongate:—

Session-house within the parish of Canongate, the twenty-second day of February, One thousand seven hundred eighty-seven years;

Sederunt of the Managers of the Kirk and Kirkyard Funds of Canongate;

Which day, the treasurer to the said funds produced a letter from Mr Robert Burns, of date the 6th current, which was read and appointed to be engrossed in their sederunt-book, and of which letter the tenor follows:—

'To the honourable bailies of Canongate, Edinburgh—Gentlemen, I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your church-yard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

'Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory —a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying.

'I petition you then, gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your very humble servant (*sic subscribitur*), ROBERT BURNS.'

Therefore the said managers, in consideration of the laudable and disinterested motion of Mr Burns, and the propriety of his request, did, and hereby do, unanimously, grant power and liberty to the said Robert Burns to erect a headstone at the grave of the said Robert Fergusson, and to keep up and preserve the same to his memory in all time coming. Extracted forth of the records of the managers, by WILLIAM SPROTT, *Clerk*.

TO [MR PETER STUART.]

EDINBURGH [*February* 1787.]

MY DEAR SIR—You may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish, ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By the by, there is nothing in the whole frame of man which seems to be so unaccountable as that thing called Conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts

of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun; and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts Conscience, and harrows us with the feelings of the damned.

I have enclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr Sprott sent it me.

The inscription on the stone is as follows:—

'HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON, POET.

BORN, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1751—DIED, 16TH OCTOBER 1774.

No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,
"No storied urn, nor animated bust;"
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way
To pour her sorrows o'er her Poet's dust.'

On the other side of the stone is as follows:—

'By special grant of the managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson.'[1]

Dr Currie printed this letter, without letting us know to whom it was addressed, only intimating that he was 'one of the ablest of our poet's correspondents.' The present editor has arrived by a chain of connected circumstances at the conclusion, that the person addressed was Peter Stuart, editor of the *Star* newspaper in London, a person very noted as a government writer in the daily press during the first decade of the present century. Stuart appears to have known Fergusson in his early youth, and to have entertained a warm admiration of his talents and amiable character. In his reply to this letter of Burns, 8th March, he indulges in a very absurd tirade against the poor Canongate magistrates, as if they had been concerned in starving the poet whose grave they now allowed Burns to adorn. This letter, however, is serviceable in informing us of the country rumour regarding Burns's position and doings in Edinburgh. 'Next week,' says the writer, 'I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Edinburgh, and, as my stay will be for eight or ten days, I wish you or **** would take a snug well-aired bedroom for me, where I may have the pleasure of seeing you over a morning cup of tea. But by all accounts it will be

[1] If this order of the managers was designed to set aside the ground from all future use as a part of the general place of sepulture, I am sorry to remark that it has been, through inadvertence in some quarter, violated, as I was present some years ago when the remains of Mr John Inverarity, a nephew of Fergusson, were deposited in the grave of the poet.

a matter of some difficulty to see you at all, unless your company is bespoke a week beforehand. There is a great rumour here concerning your intimacy with the Duchess of [Gordon], and other ladies of distinction. I am really told that "cards to invite fly by thousands each night," and if you had one, I suppose there would also be "bribes to your old secretary."'[1]

The keen sympathy felt by Burns for Fergusson was expressed on many occasions. Very soon after making the arrangements for the tombstone (March 19, 1787), he presented a copy of the works of the Edinburgh poet to a young lady, and wrote the following lines under the portrait which served for a frontispiece:—

[VERSES UNDER THE PORTRAIT OF FERGUSSON.]

Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleased,
And yet can starve the author of the pleasure!
Oh thou, my elder brother in misfortune,
By far my elder brother in the Muses,
With tears I pity thy unhappy fate!
Why is the bard unpitied by the world,
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

[EDINBURGH, *February* 1787.]

MY LORD—I wanted to purchase a profile of your lordship, which I was told was to be got in town; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a 'human face divine.' The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with anything of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, there is my noble patron, my generous benefactor. Allow me, my lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your lordship, by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition. I owe much to your lordship: and, what has not in some other instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your lordship's, than which I can say nothing more: and I would not be beholden to favours that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character

[1] These are snatches of a singular ballad, then in full vogue among men of wit and pleasure.

in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much-favoured sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me, then, my lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honour to be, your lordship's highly indebted, and ever grateful humble servant, R. B.

VERSES INTENDED TO BE WRITTEN BELOW A NOBLE EARL'S PICTURE.

Whose is that noble, dauntless brow?
  And whose that eye of fire?
And whose that generous princely mien
  Even rooted foes admire?

Stranger, to justly shew that brow,
  And mark that eye of fire,
Would take His hand, whose vernal tints
  His other works admire.

Bright as a cloudless summer sun,
  With stately port he moves;
His guardian seraph eyes with awe
  The noble ward he loves.

Among the illustrious Scottish sons
  That chief thou may'st discern;
Mark Scotia's fond returning eye,
  It dwells upon Glencairn.

It would appear that the earl did not extend the desired permission, for the verses remained in manuscript till a recent period.[1]

In the new edition, Burns inserted a considerable number of pieces either excluded from the first, or written since. He now let *Death and Dr Hornbook* go forth, also the *Ordination,* and the *Address to the Unco Guid,* which various considerations had formerly induced him to repress. *The Brigs of Ayr, Tam Samson's Elegy,* and the *Address to Edinburgh,* were the principal new pieces which now appeared. He also included some juvenile pieces of less moment, as *John Barleycorn,* a translation of the *First Psalm,* and *A Prayer under the Pressure of Violent Anguish,*

[1] The original is now shewn at Dumfries, at the house in which Burns died.

besides three or four songs. Perhaps we should include in this group a political ballad, entitled *A Fragment*, narrating, in the quaintly familiar language of a rustic, the events of, and connected with, the American war.

A FRAGMENT.

TUNE—*Killiecrankie.*

When Guildford good our pilot stood,
  And did our helm thraw, man,
Ae night, at tea, began a plea,
  Within America, man:
Then up they gat the maskin'-pat,
  And in the sea did jaw, man; dash
And did nae less, in full Congress,
  Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then through the lakes Montgomery[1] takes,
  I wat he was na slaw, man;
Down Lowrie's Burn[2] he took a turn,
  And Carleton did ca', man;
But yet, what-reck, he, at Quebec,
  Montgomery-like[3] did fa', man,
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
  Amang his en'mies a', man.

Poor Tammy Gage, within a cage,
  Was kept at Boston ha', man;[4]
Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe
  For Philadelphia,[5] man;
Wi' sword and gun he thought a sin
  Guid Christian blood to draw, man:
But at New York, wi' knife and fork,
  Sir-loin he hackèd sma',[6] man.

[1] General Richard Montgomery invaded Canada, autumn 1775, and took Montreal, the British commander, Sir Guy Carleton, retiring before him. In an attack on Quebec he was less fortunate, being killed by a storm of grape-shot in leading on his men at Cape Diamond.

[2] Lowrie's Burn, a pseudonym for the St Lawrence.

[3] A passing compliment to the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, the patrons of the poet.

[4] General Gage, governor of Massachusetts, was cooped up in Boston by General Washington during the latter part of 1775 and early part of 1776. In consequence of his inefficiency, he was replaced in October of that year by General Howe.

[5] General Howe removed his army from New York to Philadelphia in the summer of 1777.

[6] Alluding to a *razzia* made by orders of Howe at Peekskill, March 1777, when a large quantity of cattle belonging to the Americans was destroyed.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur and whip,
  Till Fraser brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
  In Saratoga shaw,[1] man. wood
Cornwallis fought as lang 's he dought,
  And did the buckskins claw, man;[2]
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save,
  He hung it to the wa', man.

Then Montague, and Guildford too,
  Began to fear a fa', man;
And Sackville dour, wha stood the stoure, obdurate—dust
  The German Chief to thraw, man: thwart
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,
  Nae mercy had at a', man;
And Charlie Fox threw by the box,
  And lowsed his tinkler jaw, man.

Then Rockingham took up the game,
  Till death did on him ca', man;
When Shelburne meek held up his cheek,
  Conform to gospel law, man;
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
  They did his measures thraw, man,
For North and Fox united stocks,
  And bore him to the wa', man.[3]

Then clubs and hearts were Charlie's cartes,
  He swept the stakes awa', man,
Till the diamond's ace, of Indian race,
  Led him a sair *faux pas*, man;[4]
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads, cheers
  On Chatham's boy did ca', man;
And Scotland drew her pipe, and blew,
  'Up, Willie, waur them a', man!' vanquish

[1] General Burgoyne surrendered his army to General Gates, at Saratoga, on the Hudson, October 1776.

[2] Alluding to the active operations of Lord Cornwallis in Virginia, in 1780, all of which ended, however, in his surrender of his army at Yorktown, October 1781, while vainly hoping for reinforcement from General Clinton at New York.

[3] Lord North's administration was succeeded by that of the Marquis of Rockingham, March 1782. At the death of the latter in the succeeding July, Lord Shelburne became prime minister, and Mr Fox resigned his secretaryship. Under his lordship, peace was restored, January 1783. By the union of Lord North and Mr Fox, Lord Shelburne was soon after f[illegible]sign in favour of his rivals, the heads of the celebrated Coalition.

[illegible]ous India Bill, by which his ministry was brought to destruction, December 1783.

Behind the throne then Grenville's gone,
  A secret word or twa, man;
While slee Dundas aroused the class,
  Be-north the Roman Wa', man:
And Chatham's wraith, in heavenly graith,
  (Inspirèd Bardies saw, man)
Wi' kindling eyes cried: 'Willie, rise!
  Would I hae feared them a', man?'

But, word and blow, North, Fox, and Co.,
  Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man, struck
Till Suthron raise, and coost their claise
  Behind him in a raw, man;
And Caledon threw by the drone,
  And did her whittle draw, man; knife
And swoor fu' rude, through dirt and blood,
  To make it guid in law, man.[1]

* * * *

It would be pedantic to explain this series of allusions more particularly than by the few short notes appended. It is curious as an example of that brief, direct, though not always orderly narration, in which the rustic mind usually gives its version of the most complicated political and historical transactions. Burns was at this time in a raw and unenlightened state as a politician. Dr Blair remarked, with as much truth as point, that his politics 'smelt of the smithy.' He professed a sentimental attachment to Jacobitism, and was thus set down as a Tory. He at the same time sympathised with Dempster and other independent members of the House of Commons, and assumed, as we have seen, the blue-and-yellow vesture, which denoted in those days an attachment to the principles of Mr Fox, though perhaps as much out of complaisance to the Earl of Glencairn and the Erskines, all of whom were Whigs, as from any other cause. In plain truth, as intimated by Professor Stewart, he had now no determinate party views, and he himself confesses as much in a hurried note which he seems to have addressed to the Dean of Faculty with reference to this very ballad:—

TO THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE.

Two o'clock.

SIR—I shewed the enclosed political ballad to my Lord Glencairn, to have his opinion whether I should publish it; as I suspect my

[1] In the new parliament called by Mr Pitt, after his accession to office, in the spring of 1784, amidst the many new members brought in for his support, and that of the king's prerogative, there was an exceeding proportion from Scotland.

political tenets, such as they are, may be rather heretical in the opinion of some of my best friends. I have a few first principles in religion and politics, which, I believe, I would not easily part with; but for all the etiquette of, by whom, in what manner, &c., I would not have a dissocial word about it with any one of God's creatures, particularly an honoured patron or a respected friend. His lordship seems to think the piece may appear in print, but desired me to send you a copy for your suffrage. I am, with the sincerest gratitude for the notice with which you have been pleased to honour the rustic bard, sir, your most devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.[1]

The only other piece which has not already been presented in these pages, is the set of verses

TO A HAGGIS.[2]

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm: small guts
Weel are ye wordy of a grace
As lang 's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need,
While through your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic labour dight,
And cut you up wi' ready slight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright
Like ony ditch;
And then, oh what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin', rich!

Then horn for horn they stretch and strive,
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,
Till a' their weel-swall'd kytes belyve stomachs—by and by
Are bent like drums;
Then auld guidman, maist like to rive, burst
'Bethankit!' hums.

[1] Printed in the *Ayr Observer*, October 1846.

[2] The haggis is a dish peculiar to Scotland, though supposed to be of French extraction. It is composed of minced offal of mutton, mixed with oatmeal and suet, and boiled in a sheep's stomach. When made in *Elspa's* way, with 'a curn o' spice' (see the *Gentle Shepherd*), it is an agreeable, albeit a somewhat heavy dish, always providing that no horror be felt at the idea of its preparation.

Is there that owre his French ragout,
Or olio that wad staw a sow,
Or fricassee wad mak her spew
Wi' perfect scunner, — disgust
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view
On sic a dinner!

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a withered rash, — feeble
His spindle-shank a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit; — fist
Through bloody flood or field to dash,
Oh how unfit!

But mark the rustic, haggis-fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walie nieve a blade, — lusty fist
He'll mak it whissle;
And legs, and arms, and heads will sned, — shear
Like taps o' thrissle.

Ye Powers wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware — thin stuff
That jaups in luggies; — splashes in bowls
But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer,
Gie her a Haggis!

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, *March* 8, 1787.

DEAR SIR—Yours came safe, and I am, as usual, much indebted to your goodness. Poor Captain Montgomery is cast. Yesterday it was tried whether the husband could proceed against the unfortunate lover without first divorcing his wife, and their gravities on the bench were unanimously of opinion that M—— may prosecute for damages directly, and need not divorce his wife at all if he pleases. . . . . O all ye powers of love unfortunate, and friendless wo, pour the balm of sympathising pity on the grief-torn, tender heart of the hapless fair one!

My two songs on Miss W. Alexander and Miss P[eggy] K—— [the Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle, and Bonnie Doon] were likewise tried yesterday by a jury of literati, and found defamatory libels against the fastidious powers of Poesy and Taste; and the author forbidden to print them under pain of forfeiture of character. I cannot help almost shedding a tear to the memory of two songs that had cost me some pains, and that I valued a good deal; but I must submit.

My most respectful compliments to Mrs Hamilton and Miss Kennedy.

My poor unfortunate songs come again across my memory. D—— the pedant, frigid soul of criticism for ever and ever!

R. B.

The Faculty Decisions, under the date March 7, 1787, report the judgment of the Court of Session in a case in which a legal point arises between Mr C. M—— C—— of S——, in Ayrshire, and Captain James Montgomery, late of the 93d foot, as to whether the former could prosecute the latter for the dishonour of his wife, without previously divorcing her. It appears that the lady was heiress of S——; that she had had two children to her husband; and that she left his house in June 1783, in company with Captain Montgomery, to whom she bore a child in November of the subsequent year. From Burns's expressions, we are led to understand that there were extenuating circumstances in the conduct of the lady, and that the policy of the husband in abstaining from a process of divorce, which would separate him from a goodly estate, was not generally admired. Miss Peggy K—— was another Ayrshire lady of fortune, already oftener than once alluded to in these pages, as having loved not wisely but too well.

Burns could scarcely but take an interest in the proceedings of the supreme civil court, always an object of respect with the rustic population of Scotland. As a result of his visits to the Parliament House, we have two well-drawn sketches of the leading barristers of that day—namely, the Dean of Faculty, Harry Erskine, and the Lord Advocate, Mr Ilay Campbell (subsequently Lord President).

EXTEMPORE IN THE COURT OF SESSION.

TUNE—*Killiecrankie.*

LORD ADVOCATE.

He clenched his pamphlets in his fist,
  He quoted and he hinted,
Till in a declamation-mist,
  His argument he tint it: lost
He gapèd for 't, he graipèd for 't, groped
  He fand it was awa', man;
But what his common-sense came short,
  He ekèd out wi' law, man.

MR ERSKINE.

Collected Harry stood a wee,
  Then opened out his arm, man:
His lordship sat wi' ruefu' e'e,
  And eyed the gathering storm, man;
Like wind-driven hail, it did assail,
  Or torrents owre a linn, man;
The Bench sae wise lift up their eyes,
  Half-wauken'd wi' the din, man.

TO MR WILLIAM DUNBAR.

LAWNMARKET, *Monday Morning.*

DEAR SIR—In justice to Spenser, I must acknowledge that there is scarcely a poet in the language could have been a more agreeable present to me; and in justice to you, allow me to say, sir, that I have not met with a man in Edinburgh to whom I would so willingly have been indebted for the gift. The tattered rhymes I herewith present you, and the handsome volumes of Spenser for which I am so much indebted to your goodness, may perhaps be not in proportion to one another; but be that as it may, my gift, though far less valuable, is as sincere a mark of esteem as yours.

The time is approaching when I shall return to my shades; and I am afraid my numerous Edinburgh friendships are of so tender a construction, that they will not bear carriage with me. Yours is one of the few that I could wish of a more robust constitution. It is indeed very probable that when I leave this city, we part never more to meet in this sublunary sphere; but I have a strong fancy that in some future eccentric planet, the comet of happier systems than any with which astronomy is yet acquainted, you and I, among the harum-scarum sons of imagination and whim, with a hearty shake of a hand, a metaphor, and a laugh, shall recognise old acquaintance:

Where Wit may sparkle all its rays,
  Uncurst with Caution's fears;
That Pleasure, basking in the blaze,
  Rejoice for endless years.

I have the honour to be, with the warmest sincerity, dear sir, &c.

R. B.

TO MR JAMES CANDLISH,[1]

STUDENT IN PHYSIC, GLASGOW COLLEGE.

EDINBURGH, *March* 21, 1787.

MY EVER DEAR OLD ACQUAINTANCE—I was equally surprised and pleased at your letter, though I daresay you will think, by my delaying so long to write to you, that I am so drowned in the intoxication of good-fortune as to be indifferent to old, and once dear connections. The truth is, I was determined to write a good letter, full of argument, amplification, erudition, and, as Bayes says, *all that*. I thought of it, and thought of it, and by my soul I could not; and, lest you should mistake the cause of my silence, I just sit down to tell you so. Don't give yourself credit, though, that the strength of your logic scares me: the truth is, I never mean to meet you on that ground at all. You have shewn me one thing which was to be demonstrated—that strong pride of reasoning, with a little affectation of singularity, may mislead the best of hearts. I likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in 'the daring path Spinosa trod;' but experience of the weakness, not the strength, of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.

I am still, in the Apostle Paul's phrase, 'The old man with his deeds,' as when we were sporting about the 'Lady Thorn.' I shall be four weeks here yet at least, and so I shall expect to hear from you; welcome sense, welcome nonsense. I am, with the warmest sincerity, R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *March* 22, 1787.

MADAM—I read your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom; now I am distinguished, patronised, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures: his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

[1] Mr Candlish, like Burns, the offspring of obscure parents in Ayrshire, rose through great difficulties to the laborious calling of a private teacher, first in connection with the Glasgow, and then the Edinburgh University. He married Miss Smith, one of the six belles of Mauchline, and died in 1806. A son of this pair has attained a historical position in his native [illegible] He is the Rev. Dr Robert S. Candlish, of the St George's Free Church, Edinburgh.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects: there I can give you no light. It is all

> 'Dark as was chaos ere the infant sun
> Was rolled together, or had tried his beams
> Athwart the gloom profound.'

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride: to continue to deserve it, is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business—for which, Heaven knows, I am unfit enough—to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles, to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers, and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts. I have dallied long enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for, and some other bosom-ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable—nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character; but where God and nature have intrusted the welfare of others to his care—where the trust is sacred and the ties are dear—that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connections will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship: with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry; being bred to labour secures me independence, and the Muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character which gave me the notice of my country and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honoured madam, I have given you the bard, his situation and his views, native as they are in his own bosom. R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *15th April* 1787.

MADAM—There is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, madam, I trust I have too much pride

for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broken open your letter, but

> 'Rude am I in speech,
> And therefore little can I grace my cause
> In speaking for myself'—

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart, and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest sense of your goodness.

I come abroad, in print, for certain on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only, by the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for Dr Moore's and Miss Williams's copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place, but that we can settle when I have the honour of waiting on you.

Dr Smith[1] was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him. R. B.

It has already been sufficiently intimated that the Ayrshire Ploughman was the lion of the season in Edinburgh. Upon the strength of the few extracts from his poems which had been circulated by magazines and newspapers, he had been received into the highest circles of society. Here, by the general propriety of his demeanour, and the charms of his conversation, he had deepened the interest which his poetry had awakened in his behalf. It was a wonderful transition for one who, only in last autumn, had been restrained for some time at home to help in the labours of a humble farm. He had been received with courtesy by the remains of that brilliant circle of Scottish literati who adorned the latter half of the eighteenth century. He had been entertained with sincere respect for his talents by such examples of patrician dignity as made Edinburgh their winter haunt. Men of the middle rank had given Burns a society the more dangerous, that it came to him in greater pressure, and set him freer from restraint. Yet it does not appear that the Bard was materially affected in any respect by this singular change of circumstances.

Elegant society in Edinburgh formed in those days, as it does still, a limited circle. From the large infusion of the professions of the law and physic, and of the class connected with the university, it had a tone of enlightenment and refinement much more remarkable than any gaiety or splendour in which it indulged. There was also, however, an infusion of bacchanalianism, producing occasionally scenes of uproar even in the public dancing-assemblies. At this particular crisis, the usual simplicity was disturbed in no

[1] The author of the *Wealth of Nations*.

small degree by the Duchess of Gordon, a person who might be said to spend on mere gay life an energy, personal grace, and genius, which might have been expected, with a good direction, to produce the most brilliant results. A letter is before us, written by a member of the bar to a friend in India in the February preceding Burns's arrival in Edinburgh, and containing a striking recital of the habits of this lady, and her influence over society. 'The good town,' says Mr Drummond, 'is uncommonly crowded and splendid at present. The example of dissipation set by her Grace the Duchess of Gordon is far from shewing vice her own image. It is really astonishing to think what effect a single person will have on public manners, when supported by high rank and great address. She is never absent from a public place, and the later the hour, so much the better. It is often four o'clock in the morning before she goes to bed, and she never requires more than five hours' sleep. Dancing, cards, and company, occupy her whole time.'[1] Such was the leader of *bon-ton* in Edinburgh at the crisis when our Scottish Tityrus plunged into it. It evidently was not a happy accident for a person of his peculiar circumstances and prospects.

It must also be observed, that the general tone of middle-class life at this epoch was convivial. Lawyers of good repute, merchants, topping tradesmen, teachers of the High School—all frequented taverns in the evening, very generally in clubs, or it might be in masonic capacity, for the social pleasures which they had not yet learned to enjoy under the decenter sanctions of the home circle. Men dined early in those days, and attended to business afterwards till about eight o'clock, by which time they considered themselves at liberty to see after their festive pleasures. Either a private supper-party invited them, with their wives, or they knew of some misty snuggery in John Dowie's or Daniel Douglas's tavern, in certain alleys of the High Street, where they could calculate upon meeting a little gleesome group, with which to spend three, or it might be four hours, over ale or punch. Into these coteries Burns was often drawn by his social temper and good-nature; and here also lay for him a great danger.

It really does not appear, however—although the contrary has been asserted or insinuated—that the Bard was either spoiled for the common drudgeries of life by aristocratic attentions, or depraved in any appreciable extent by contact with the somewhat

[1] This letter is in the possession of Neil Fergusson Blair, Esq., Balthayock House, Perthshire.

over-festive citizens. The general bearing of his letters all through this spring is remarkable, on the contrary, for soberness in all applications of the word. He coolly surveyed his present and prospective position, estimated at their due weight the flatteries bestowed upon him, and prepared with a full share of the national foresight for the struggle which he was to encounter as soon as he should have to apply his literary gains in helping out a livelihood. There really is no broad or glaring trace in the traditions of Edinburgh society of any bacchanalianism indulged in by Burns. Every insinuation of such a nature, when carefully inquired into, vanishes into air. Professor Stewart, writing with a reference to the summer of 1787, says: 'Notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter of Burns's predilection for convivial and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety from all of him that fell under my own observation. He told me, indeed, himself that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him entirely of any merit in his temperance.'

The allusion to 'not very select society' looks at first somewhat startling; but let it be recollected that Professor Stewart, who lived in the purest and most exalted circle, would be apt to regard in this light men who were far from being either vicious or of mean grade. He probably alludes to such men as Smellie, Dunbar, Mr William Nicol of the High School, Mr Alexander Cunningham, W.S., and others, who, though not members of Professor Stewart's set, and though perhaps of over-indulgent habits, were yet men of honourable character and respectable position. Amongst them Burns felt himself at his proper level. With them his comic genius indulged in freer flights than in the stiff society of the New Town. He found in these men kind and genial hearts, much wit and cleverness, and a hearty appreciation of his own talents. It is not surprising that he entered into and enjoyed their society. There is, however, no reason to believe that Burns was thus exposed to any demoralising influence beyond what would have been found in middle-class society in every country town in Scotland.

Of all the descriptions of Burns during this season, there is none which can pretend to the authority of Professor Walker's, for this gentleman saw him frequently, and was, on the whole, impartial towards him. After remarking that Burns, in good society, never struggled to put on for a moment a better manner than was natural to him, he goes on to say: 'Though he took his full share in

conversation, not only from a perception that it was expected, but from a consciousness that it would gratify expectation, yet he did so in a manner that was dignified and manly, and altogether remote from petulant vanity, or offensive exultation in an importance so new to him. His deportment was plain without vulgarity, and though it had little softness, and shewed him ready to repel any insult with decision at least, if not with roughness, yet he soon made it evident that those who behaved to him with propriety were in no danger of any unprovoked or boorish rudeness.'

Professor Walker first met Burns at Dr Blacklock's at breakfast. 'I was not much struck with his first appearance, as I had previously heard it described. His person, though strong and well knit, and much superior to what might be expected in a ploughman, was still rather coarse in its outline. His stature, from want of setting up, appeared to be only of the middle size, but was rather above it. His motions were firm and decided, and though without any pretensions to grace, were at the same time so free from clownish constraint, as to shew that he had not always been confined to the society of his profession. His countenance was not of that elegant cast which is most frequent among the upper ranks, but it was manly and intelligent, and marked by a thoughtful gravity which shaded at times into sternness. In his large dark eye the most striking index of his genius resided. It was full of mind, and would have been singularly expressive, under the management of one who could employ it with more art, for the purpose of expression.

'He was plainly, but properly dressed, in a style midway between the holiday-costume of a farmer and that of the company with which he now associated. His black hair, without powder, at a time when it was very generally worn, was tied behind, and spread upon his forehead. Upon the whole, from his person, physiognomy, and dress, had I met him near a seaport, and been required to guess his condition, I should have probably conjectured him to be the master of a merchant-vessel of the most respectable class.

'In no part of his manner was there the slightest degree of affectation; nor could a stranger have suspected, from anything in his behaviour or conversation, that he had been for some months the favourite of all the fashionable circles of a metropolis.

'In conversation he was powerful. His conceptions and expression were of corresponding vigour, and on all subjects were as remote as possible from commonplaces. Though somewhat

authoritative, it was in a way which gave little offence, and was readily imputed to his inexperience in those modes of smoothing dissent and softening assertion which are important characteristics of polished manners. After breakfast, I requested him to communicate some of his unpublished pieces. . . . . I paid particular attention to his recitation, which was plain, slow, articulate, and forcible, but without any eloquence or art. He did not always lay the emphasis with propriety, nor did he humour the sentiment by the variations of his voice. He was standing, during the time, with his face towards the window, to which, and not to his auditors, he directed his eye; thus depriving himself of any additional effect which the language of his composition might have borrowed from the language of his countenance. In this he resembled the generality of singers in ordinary company, who, to shun any charge of affectation, withdraw all meaning from their features, and lose the advantage by which vocal performers on the stage augment the impression and give energy to the sentiment of the song.

'The day after my first introduction to Burns, I supped in company with him at Dr Blair's. The other guests were very few, and as each had been invited chiefly to have an opportunity of meeting with the poet, the doctor endeavoured to draw him out, and to make him the central figure of the group. Though he therefore furnished the greatest proportion of the conversation, he did no more than what he saw evidently was expected. Men of genius have often been taxed with a proneness to commit blunders in company, from that ignorance or negligence of the laws of conversation which must be imputed to the absorption of their thoughts in a favourite subject, or to the want of that daily practice in attending to the petty modes of behaviour which is incompatible with a studious life. From singularities of this sort Burns was unusually free; yet on the present occasion he made a more awkward slip than any that are reported of the poets or mathematicians most noted for absence. Being asked from which of the public places he had received the greatest gratification, he named the High Church, but gave the preference as a preacher to the colleague of our worthy entertainer, whose celebrity rested on his pulpit eloquence, in a tone so pointed and decisive, as to throw the whole company into the most foolish embarrassment. The doctor, indeed, with becoming self-command, endeavoured to relieve the rest by cordially seconding the encomium so injudiciously introduced; but this did not prevent the conversation from

labouring under that compulsory effort which was unavoidable, while the thoughts of all were full of the only subject on which it was improper to speak. Of this blunder Burns must instantly have been aware, but he shewed the return of good sense by making no attempt to repair it. His secret mortification was indeed so great, that he never mentioned the circumstance until many years after, when he told me that his silence had proceeded from the pain which he felt in recalling it to his memory.'

One fault only has been attributed to the manners of Burns at this period, and it remained with him to the last. He was apt to pronounce more decisively than is consistent with politeness. The gravity of a fault which prevents others from easily expressing a contrary opinion, and thus puts an awkward restraint upon a company, may be readily admitted. But surely some allowance is called for in favour of one who, whatever his native endowments, had never been in circumstances to acquire that training which makes deference in the well-bred gentleman something like a second nature. Forming his ideas with equal promptitude and clearness, he was exactly the kind of man to utter them with little hesitation as to collateral considerations of expediency. Then Burns had an honest contempt for whatever bore the appearance of meanness and servility. To assert his own exemption from the faults most apt to beset a person in his situation, he was too ready to fall into the opposite error of a hardness of manner towards persons presumedly his superiors, and who were not of the set who won his affections by their unpretending kindness. The greatest breach of decorum which he is known to have committed in Edinburgh society, is one recorded by Mr Cromek. It has been several times brought forward as characteristic of Burns at this period; in which we think there is about as much justice as there would be in describing some worthy person as of a bad temper because he once fell into a passion:—'At a private breakfast-party, in a literary circle of Edinburgh, the conversation turned on the poetical merit and pathos of Gray's *Elegy*, a poem of which he was enthusiastically fond. A clergyman present, remarkable for his love of paradox and for his eccentric notions upon every subject, distinguished himself by an injudicious and ill-timed attack on this exquisite poem, which Burns, with generous warmth for the reputation of Gray, manfully defended. As the gentleman's remarks were rather general than specific, Burns urged him to bring forward the passages which he thought exceptionable. He made several attempts to quote the poem, but always in a

blundering, inaccurate manner. Burns bore all this for a good while with his usual good-natured forbearance, till at length, goaded by the fastidious criticisms and wretched quibblings of his opponent, he roused himself, and with an eye flashing contempt and indignation, and with great vehemence of gesticulation, he thus addressed the cold critic: "Sir, I now perceive a man may be an excellent judge of poetry by square and rule, and after all be a d—— blockhead!"' Such an outburst might happen to a man of warm and sensitive nature *by surprise;* but that is a totally different thing from a habit of outraging propriety in conversation.

Amongst those who have reported on the aspects of Burns's mind and demeanour at this crisis, a prominent place is due to Professor Stewart, who had had the advantage of seeing him ere he emerged or hoped to emerge from the shades of life. The learned professor addresses Dr Currie: 'The attentions he received during his stay in town from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station—plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness.

'The variety of his engagements, while in Edinburgh, prevented me from seeing him so often as I could have wished. In the course of the spring he called on me once or twice, at my request, early in the morning, and walked with me to Braid Hills, in the neighbourhood of the town, when he charmed me still more by his private conversation than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning-walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained.

'In his political principles he was then a Jacobite: which was perhaps owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of Lord Mareschal. Indeed he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in some

convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the winter of 1786–7; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversations turned chiefly on his literary projects or his private affairs.

'I do not recollect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me that you had ever seen Burns.[1] If you have, it is superfluous for me to add, that the idea which his conversation conveyed of the powers of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation, I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.

'Among the subjects on which he was accustomed to dwell, the characters of the individuals with whom he happened to meet was plainly a favourite one. The remarks he made on them were always shrewd and pointed, though frequently inclining too much to sarcasm. His praise of those he loved was sometimes indiscriminate and extravagant; but this, I suspect, proceeded rather from the caprice and humour of the moment, than from the effects of attachment in blinding his judgment. His wit was ready, and always impressed with the marks of a vigorous understanding; but, to my taste, not often pleasing or happy.'

Walter Scott was at this time a boy of sixteen; but, though condemned to task-work in his father's office, he already possessed the taste and feelings which would have enabled him to appreciate the society of Burns. He had read his poetry, and he ardently desired to see the poet. An opportunity was at length furnished when Burns came to the house of Dr Adam Ferguson, whose eldest son (now Sir Adam Ferguson) was Scott's intimate friend and companion. The unaffected description of the meeting which Scott afterwards communicated to Mr Lockhart is deeply interesting:—'Of course,' says he, 'we youngsters sat silent, looked, and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in

[1] Dr Currie had met with Burns.

Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side—on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written underneath:

"Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain—
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptised in tears."

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of the *Justice of Peace*.[1] I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word which, though in mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with great pleasure. His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr Nasmyth's picture; but to me it conveys the idea

[1] Langhorne wrote *The Country Justice*, a poem in three parts, at the request of Richard Burn, Esq., the well-known author of a work on the duties of a justice-of-peace. The dedication to Mr Burn is dated 1774. Amidst much commonplace, and many stupid political remarks, occurs this passage, reminding us much, in some parts, of the manner of Campbell:—

'Be this, ye rural magistrates, your plan:
Firm be your justice, but be friends to man. . . . .

Frail in his genius, in his heart too frail,
Born but to err, and erring to bewail,
Shalt thou his faults with eye severe explore,
And give to life one human weakness more?

Still mark if vice or nature prompts the deed;
Still mark the strong temptation and the need;
On pressing want, on famine's powerful call,
At least more lenient let thy justice fall.

For him who, lost to every hope of life,
Has long with fortune held unequal strife,
Known to no human love, no human care,
The friendless, homeless object of despair;
For the poor vagrant feel, while he complains,
Nor from sad freedom send to sadder chains.
Alike if folly or misfortune brought
Those last of woes his evil days have wrought;
Believe with social misery and with me,
Folly's misfortune in the first degree.

Perhaps on some inhospitable shore
The houseless wretch a widowed parent bore;
Who, then no more by golden prospects led,
Of the poor Indian begged a leafy bed.
Cold on Canadian hills,' &c.

that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school; that is, none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce guidman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments: the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a cast which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. * * * I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information, more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the Duchess of Gordon remark this.'

Sir Adam Ferguson favours me with some particulars of the visit of Burns to his father's house on this occasion. It was the custom of Dr Ferguson to have a conversazione at his house in the Sheens once a week for his principal literary friends. Professor Stewart on this occasion offered to bring Burns, a proposal to which Dr Ferguson readily assented. The poet found himself amongst the most brilliant literary society which Edinburgh then afforded. Sir Adam thinks that Black, Hutton, and John Home were amongst those present. He had himself brought his young friend Walter Scott, as yet unnoted by his seniors. Burns seemed at first little inclined to mingle easily in the company; he went about the room, looking at the pictures on the walls. The print described by Scott arrested his attention; he read aloud the lines underneath, but before getting to the end of them his voice faltered, and his big black eye filled with tears. A little after, he turned with much interest to the

company, pointed to the picture, and with some eagerness asked if any one could tell him who had written those affecting lines. The philosophers were silent; no one knew: but, after a decent interval, the pale lame boy near by said in a negligent manner: 'They're written by one Langhorne.' An explanation of the place where they occur followed, and Burns fixed a look of half-serious interest on the youth, while he said: 'You'll be a man yet, sir.' Scott may be said to have derived literary ordination from Burns.[1]

In this memorable spring Burns commenced a second Commonplace-book, of which several entries near the beginning alone fulfil the design with which he starts. The remainder appear to be merely copies of pithy expressions which he had introduced into private letters.

EDINBURGH, *April* 9, 1787.

'As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr Palgrave, that "half a word fixed upon, or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection." I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of

[1] Scott relates elsewhere that the house of Dr Ferguson, 'while he continued to reside in Edinburgh, was a general point of reunion among his friends, particularly of a Sunday, where there generally met, at a hospitable dinner-party, the most distinguished literati of the old time who still remained, with such young persons as were thought worthy to approach their circle, and listen to their conversation. The place of his residence was an insulated house at some distance from the town, which its visitors (notwithstanding its internal comforts) chose to call for that reason Kamtschatka.'—*Quarterly Review*, xxxvi. 197. This house forms part of a street called *the Sheens*, from its proximity to the remains of an ancient monastery dedicated to St Catherine of Sienna. It stands at the south end of the street, on the east side, with its gable facing along a lane. It was in this house, in a room up stairs, now used as a bedroom, that Burns met Scott.

The copy of the print which so greatly affected Burns remains in its original state in the possession of Sir Adam Ferguson. Somewhat oddly, the name 'LANGHORNE' is quoted at the bottom of the lines, but in so small a character that the poet might well fail to read it.

friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

'For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confidant. I will sketch every character that anyway strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law-phrase, *without feud or favour*. Where I hit on anything clever, my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

'My own private story likewise, my love-adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light—shall be occasionally inserted. In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up to sale.

'To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exception—the connection between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

> "When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
> And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart."

There confidence, confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion, that endears them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedly "reigns and revels." But this is not my lot; and, in my situation, if I am wise (which, by the by, I have no great chance of being), my fate should be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow, "to watch alone on the house-tops." Oh the pity!

* * * * *

'There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received everywhere, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due;* he meets at a great man's table a Squire Something, or a Sir Somebody; he knows the *noble* landlord at heart gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes, beyond, perhaps, any one at table: yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eightpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three-farthings, meet with attention and notice that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty!

'The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He shewed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

'With Dr Blair I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*. When he neglects me for the mere carcass of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, What do I care for him or his pomp either?'

He afterwards presents the following estimate of Dr Blair:—

'It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one; but, in my opinion, Dr Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintance; but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first, the very first rank in prose; even in poetry, a bard of Nature's making can only take the *pas* of him. He has a heart not of the very finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is truly a worthy and most respectable character.'

Amongst the men whom Burns had met and liked at the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, was Joseph Woods, a respectable member of the Edinburgh *corps dramatique*, and the more likely to be endeared to the Ayrshire poet, that he had been an intimate friend of poor Fergusson. This explains a

PROLOGUE SPOKEN BY MR WOODS ON HIS BENEFIT-NIGHT,

Monday, 16*th April* 1787.

When by a generous Public's kind acclaim,
That dearest meed is granted—honest Fame;
When here your favour is the actor's lot,
Nor even the man in private life forgot;
What breast so dead to heavenly Virtue's glow,
But heaves impassioned with the grateful throe.

Poor is the task to please a barbarous throng,
It needs no Siddons' powers in Southern's song;
But here an ancient nation famed afar,
For genius, learning high, as great in war—
Hail, CALEDONIA, name for ever dear!
Before whose sons I 'm honoured to appear!
Where every science—every nobler art—
That can inform the mind, or mend the heart,
Is known; as grateful nations oft have found
Far as the rude barbarian marks the bound.
Philosophy, no idle pedant dream,
Here holds her search by heaven-taught Reason's beam;
Here History paints with elegance and force
The tide of Empire's fluctuating course;
Here Douglas forms wild Shakspeare into plan,
And Harley[1] rouses all the god in man,
When well-formed taste and sparkling wit unite
With manly lore, or female beauty bright
(Beauty, where faultless symmetry and grace,
Can only charm us in the second place),
Witness my heart, how oft with panting fear,
As on this night, I 've met these judges here!
But still the hope Experience taught to live,
Equal to judge—you 're candid to forgive.
No hundred-headed Riot here we meet,
With Decency and Law beneath his feet;
Nor Insolence assumes fair Freedom's name;
Like CALEDONIANS, you applaud or blame.

Oh thou dread Power! whose empire-giving hand
Has oft been stretched to shield the honoured land!
Strong may she glow with all her ancient fire!
May every son be worthy of his sire!
Firm may she rise with generous disdain
At Tyranny's or direr Pleasure's chain!
Still self-dependent in her native shore,
Bold may she brave grim Danger's loudest roar,
Till Fate the curtain drops on worlds to be no more.

The new edition of the Poems appeared on the 21st April, in a handsome octavo at five shillings. Creech's advertisement contained the following note:—'As the book is published for the sole benefit of the author, it is requested that subscribers will send for their copies; and none will be delivered without money.' The

[1] *The Man of Feeling*, written by Mr Mackenzie.

Kilmarnock Preface was now abandoned, and in its stead appeared a Dedication

TO THE NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CALEDONIAN HUNT:

My Lords and Gentlemen—A Scottish bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service—where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land, those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha, at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue. I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honoured protection. I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours—I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen, and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated, and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the great fountain of honour, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your forefathers, may pleasure ever be of your party, and may social joy await your return! When harassed in courts or camps with the justlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native seats—and may domestic happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find you an inexorable foe! I have the honour to be, with the sincerest gratitude and highest respect, my Lords and Gentlemen, your most devoted, humble servant, Robert Burns.

Edinburgh, *4th April* 1787.

The volume contained another document most remarkable—a list of subscribers extending over thirty-eight pages. Several of

Burns's friends had been very active in promoting this subscription, and the high terms in which he had been spoken of in various publications, had disposed the public to extend its patronage liberally. The consequence was, the extraordinary number of fifteen hundred subscribers, engaging for two thousand eight hundred copies. The Caledonian Hunt stood at the head of the list for a hundred, for each of which, as we have already seen, a guinea was paid. Mr Creech appeared as subscribing for five hundred. Many of the nobility and gentry, and a great number of the most distinguished members of Scottish society in general, are presented in the list; in many instances, two, four, or five copies are taken; in some even a larger number. The Earl of Glencairn takes eight copies, the Countess sixteen, and Lady Betty Cunningham four. The Duchess of Gordon takes twenty-one, and the Earl of Eglintoun forty-two. Mr Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, who had taken seventy-two copies of the provincial edition, is now a subscriber for forty; and Mr Archibald Prentice, farmer at Covington Mill, is put down for twenty. Mingled with the names of individuals occur, the Scots College at Valladolid, the Scots College at Douay, the Scots College at Paris, the Scots Benedictine Monastery at Ratisbon, and the Scots Benedictine Monastery at Maryburgh. I have looked over the list with considerable care, and detect only two names belonging to persons whom I know to be still (March 1851) alive; namely, 'Francis Charteris, Esq. Junior' (now Earl of Wemyss), and 'Mr Charles Hope, advocate' (lately President of the Court of Session).

Full justice has never been done to the Scottish public of that day for its liberality to Burns. Instead of being cold towards him, or refusing to help him up from the lowly and embarrassed circumstances in which nature and fortune had placed him, there was a burst of generous enthusiasm in his favour, and he met with an amount of patronage perhaps unprecedented in Britain since the days of Pope's *Iliad*. The enactment of the Caledonian Hunt was equivalent to a gift of nearly a hundred pounds. We have seen that two persons, the Earl of Eglintoun, and Mr Miller of Dalswinton, sent him each ten guineas as a gift. Those individuals who subscribed for a multitude of copies of his Poems, may be said to have also given him presents. The whole subscription-list can only be properly viewed as a contribution of society, for the benefit of one whom they understood to be a man of merit above his circumstances. Measured against an ardent modern estimate of the genius of

Burns, the whole contribution may appear not merely small but insignificant; but measured against the idea of a young and poor man, whom various critics had ventured to pronounce an extraordinary genius, and of whom little further was as yet known, it certainly is not small. Nor were its results to the recipient of little moment. A man who had hitherto lived as a farm-labourer, and never before, as he himself confesses, had ten pounds at once in his possession, is instantaneously received into the highest circles of society, treated respectfully and kindly, and endowed with a little fortune of five hundred pounds: it may be, and doubtless is, below the merits of Burns, as we now regard him; but to him at the time, it was a windfall of fortune fully enough perhaps for him to bear with any equanimity.

TO DR MOORE.

EDINBURGH, 23*d April* 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs Dunlop. I am ill skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, sir, for the honour you have done me, and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book, is what I have in common with the world; but to regard these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight, and after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, Cowden Knowes, Banks of Yarrow, Tweed, &c., I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here; but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind. R. B.

The answer of Dr Moore was as follows:—

CLIFFORD STREET, *May* 23, 1787.

DEAR SIR—I had the pleasure of your letter by Mr Creech, and soon after he sent me the new edition of your Poems. You seem to think it incumbent on you to send to each subscriber a number of copies proportionate to his subscription-money, but you may depend

upon it, few subscribers expect more than one copy, whatever they subscribed: I must inform you, however, that I took twelve copies for those subscribers, for whose money you were so accurate as to send me a receipt; and Lord Eglintoun told me he had sent for six copies for himself, as he wished to give five of them as presents.

Some of the poems you have added in this last edition are very beautiful, particularly the *Winter Night*, the *Address to Edinburgh*, *Green Grow the Rashes*, and the two songs immediately following, the latter of which is exquisite.[1] By the way, I imagine you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge. No kind of poetry demands more delicacy or higher polishing. Horace is more admired on account of his Odes than all his other writings. But nothing now added is equal to your *Vision* and *Cotter's Saturday Night*. In these are united fine imagery, natural and pathetic description, with sublimity of language and thought. It is evident that you already possess a great variety of expression and command of the English language; you ought, therefore, to deal more sparingly for the future in the provincial dialect: why should you, by using that, limit the number of your admirers to those who understand the Scottish, when you can extend it to all persons of taste who understand the English language? In my opinion, you should plan some larger work than any you have as yet attempted. I mean, reflect upon some proper subject, and arrange the plan in your mind, without beginning to execute any part of it till you have studied most of the best English poets, and read a little more of history. The Greek and Roman stories you can read in some abridgment, and soon become master of the most brilliant facts, which must highly delight a poetical mind. You should also, and very soon may, become master of the heathen mythology, to which there are everlasting allusions in all the poets, and which in itself is charmingly fanciful. What will require to be studied with more attention, is modern history—that is, the history of France and Great Britain, from the beginning of Henry VII.'s reign. I know very well you have a mind capable of attaining knowledge by a shorter process than is commonly used, and I am certain you are capable of making a better use of it when attained than is generally done.

I beg you will not give yourself the trouble of writing to me when it is inconvenient, and make no apology when you do write for having postponed it: be assured of this, however, that I shall always be happy to hear from you. I think my friend, Mr ——, told me that you had some poems in manuscript by you of a satirical and humorous nature (in which, by the way, I think you very strong), which your prudent friends prevailed on you to omit, particularly one called *Somebody's Confession*;[2] if you will intrust me with a

[1] *The Gloomy Night is gathering fast.*

[2] Probably *Holy Willie's Prayer* is meant.

sight of any of these, I will pawn my word to give no copies, and will be obliged to you for a perusal of them.

I understand you intend to take a farm, and make the useful and respectable business of husbandry your chief occupation: this I hope will not prevent your making occasional addresses to the Nine Ladies who have shewn you such favour, one of whom visited you in the 'auld clay biggin'.' Virgil, before you, proved to the world that there is nothing in the business of husbandry inimical to poetry: and I sincerely hope that you may afford an example of a good poet being a successful farmer. I fear it will not be in my power to visit Scotland this season; when I do, I'll endeavour to find you out, for I heartily wish to see and converse with you. If ever your occasions call you to this place, I make no doubt of your paying me a visit, and you may depend on a very cordial welcome from this family. I am, dear sir, your friend and obedient servant, J. Moore.

The following letter develops a strong feature in Burns's character. Mrs Dunlop had sent him a letter of comments on his volume, particularly dwelling with regret on his reprinting *The Dream*, which she of course conceived to be likely to damage the poet at court, if his fame should ever extend so far. We here see that, while good-natured and conceding up to a certain point with friendly critics, he could also hold fast by any ground which he had once determinedly taken up:—

TO MRS DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 30*th April* 1787.

——Your criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being, either in prose or verse.

I set as little by princes, lords, clergy, critics, &c., as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by and by—illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, madam, that some of my own favourite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my *Dream*, which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in four weeks, or less, to have the honour of appearing at Dunlop in its defence in person. R. B.

Already a kind of bitterness had taken possession of Burns's

mind, as if the reception of his volume had in some degree disappointed him. This strongly appears in a letter

TO THE REV. DR HUGH BLAIR.

LAWNMARKET, EDINBURGH, 3d *May* 1787.

REV. AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR—I leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship you have shewn me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation: drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark, and honoured by the notice of those illustrious names of my country whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honour me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man, I knew very well that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character when once the novelty was over: I have made up my mind that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof-impression of Beugo's work for me, done on Indian paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c. R. B.

The answer of Dr Blair is interesting. It exhibits the calmness of ordinary talent in contrast to the irritability of genius. The noted self-complacency of the writer comes also strongly out. Everybody must be struck by the naturalness and simplicity of Burns's style, in comparison with the studied and stilted manner of the learned professor of rhetoric:—

ARGYLE SQUARE, EDINBURGH, 4th *May* 1787.

DEAR SIR—I was favoured this forenoon with your very obliging letter, together with an impression of your portrait, for which I return you my best thanks. The success you have met with I do not think was beyond your merits; and if I have had any small hand in contributing to it, it gives me great pleasure. I know no way in which literary persons who are advanced in years can do more service to the world, than in forwarding the efforts of rising genius, or bringing forth unknown merit from obscurity. I was the first person who brought out to the notice of the world the poems of Ossian: first, by the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, which I published; and afterwards by my setting on foot the undertaking for collecting and publishing the *Works of Ossian;* and I have always considered this as a meritorious action of my life.

Your situation, as you say, was indeed very singular; and in being

brought out, all at once, from the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well; and as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour.

You are now, I presume, to retire to a more private walk of life; and I trust will conduct yourself there with industry, prudence, and honour. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments which your situation will render proper, you will not, I hope, neglect to promote that esteem by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it as may raise your character still higher. At the same time, be not in too great a haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents; for on any second production you give the world, your fate as a poet will very much depend. There is no doubt a gloss of novelty, which time wears off. As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprised if in your rural retreat you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet without being somewhat of a philosopher. He must lay his account that any one, who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise. He will be inclined sometimes to court retreat, and to disappear from public view. He will not affect to shine always, that he may at proper seasons come forth with more advantage and energy. He will not think himself neglected if he be not always praised. I have taken the liberty, you see, of an old man, to give advice and make reflections, which your own good sense will, I daresay, render unnecessary.

As you mention your being just about to leave town, you are going, I should suppose, to Dumfriesshire, to look at some of Mr Miller's farms. I heartily wish the offers to be made you there may answer, as I am persuaded you will not easily find a more generous and better-hearted proprietor to live under than Mr Miller. When you return, if you come this way, I will be happy to see you, and to know concerning your future plans of life. You will find me by the 22d of this month, not in my house in Argyle Square, but at a country-house at Restalrig, about a mile east from Edinburgh, near the Musselburgh road. Wishing you all success and prosperity, I am, with real regard and esteem, dear sir, yours sincerely,

HUGH BLAIR.

Burns had become acquainted during this spring with a young man of amiable character and literary tendencies, who was destined to figure largely in his correspondence. This was Mr Robert Ainslie, afterwards well known as a respectable writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, and as an amateur in the literary walk.

Ainslie was serving his apprenticeship in the office of Mr Samuel Mitchelson in Carrubber's Close—a person, by the way, who is connected otherwise with Scottish literature; for the *haggis scene* in *Humphry Clinker* is understood to be depicted from an actual occurrence in his house, when Smollett was one of his guests. Ainslie was as thoughtless and light-hearted as a writer's apprentice could well be, and as yet scarcely twenty; though clever and intelligent, it is most likely that his perfect good-nature and love of mirth were what chiefly recommended him to Burns. The writer has often conversed with him about the bard, when age, business cares, and the gravity befitting his duty as an elder in the kirk, had given something of a different cast to his character; and never did he once admit, or seem capable of admitting, that the Ayrshire poet was anything but the 'finest fellow' that ever breathed. His love for Burns as a friend and companion remained ardent to the last. Doubtless he knew of many follies amongst the acts of the bard—no matter, his warm feelings and eloquent genius sanctified and excused all.

Burns was now preparing for a tour of the south of Scotland, to be performed partly in the company of Mr Ainslie, who had obtained a fortnight's leave of absence to visit his friends in Berwickshire. Before starting, the poet sent a letter to Mr James Johnson, an engraver, who had commenced the preparation of a large collection of the Scottish songs, with their tunes harmonised for the pianoforte. On being made acquainted with Johnson's design, the bard had entered into it with the greatest cordiality, became a contributor of songs of his own composition, and endeavoured to obtain for the work old songs and airs hitherto inedited. When the first volume appeared, at the end of May, it was found to contain two acknowledged songs by 'Mr Burns'—*Green Grow the Rashes*, and *Young Peggy Blooms our Bonniest Lass*—besides two of inferior temper which have been since placed to his account, and which are preserved in a subordinate part of the present work.

TO JAMES JOHNSON, EDITOR OF THE SCOTS MUSICAL MUSEUM.[1]

LAWNMARKET, *Friday Noon, 4th May* 1787.

DEAR SIR—I have sent you a song never before known, for your collection; the air by M'Gibbon, but I know not the author of the words, as I got it from Dr Blacklock.

[1] There is some reason to suppose that Burns made a rapid excursion into Lanarkshire in the

Farewell, my dear sir! I wished to have seen you, but I have been dreadfully throng [busy], as I march to-morrow. Had my acquaintance with you been a little older, I would have asked the favour of your correspondence, as I have met with few people whose company and conversation gave me so much pleasure, because I have met with few whose sentiments are so congenial to my own.

When Dunbar and you meet, tell him that I left Edinburgh with the idea of him hanging somewhere about my heart.

Keep the original of this song till we meet again, whenever that may be. R. B.

Burns, and his young friend Ainslie, set out on their tour on Saturday the 5th of May. They travelled on horseback, and arrived on the first evening at Berrywell, near Dunse, the residence of Mr Ainslie's father, who acted as land-steward on the Berwickshire estates of Lord Douglas. We may imagine with what elation of spirit Burns would advance, for the first time, into the valley of the Tweed, associated as it was with so many of those old native strains so dear to his heart. He kept a journal of this tour, entering not merely the events of the road, but observations on the persons with whom he met. This we shall present, interspersed with explanatory memoranda and such additional particulars as have been preserved:—

'Left Edinburgh [*May* 5, 1787]—Lammermuir Hills miserably dreary, but at times very picturesque. Langtonedge, a glorious view of the Merse—Reach Berrywell. Old Mr Ainslie an uncommon character—his hobbies, agriculture, natural philosophy, and politics. In the first, he is unexceptionably the clearest-headed, best-informed man I ever met with; in the other two, very intelligent: as a man of business, he has uncommon merit, and by fairly deserving it, has made a very decent independence. Mrs Ainslie, an excellent, sensible, cheerful, amiable old woman. Miss Ainslie

interval between the dates of the two last letters, as a journal kept by his friend, Prentice of Covington Mains, has the following entry:—

[1787] 'May 1. Cold. Making bear land. Mr Burns here.'

Mr John Prentice, son of the farmer of Covington Mains, and who preserves the journal, has no doubt that the poet had paid his father a visit that day. If such an excursion took place, it was probably connected with some circumstances about which Burns wished to observe silence. He says of one of his songs, in which a Clydesdale heroine is celebrated, it 'alludes to a part of my private history, which it is of no consequence to the world to know.' The present might be a similar case, if not the same. It is rather curious that there are so many excursions of Burns noticed for the first time in this work, and generally with some obscurity, if not mystery, resting upon them.

—her person a little *embonpoint*, but handsome; her face, particularly her eyes, full of sweetness and good-humour: she unites three qualities rarely to be found together—keen, solid penetration; sly, witty observation and remark; and the gentlest, most unaffected female modesty. Douglas, a clever, fine, promising young fellow.[1] The family-meeting with their brother, my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister. The whole family remarkably attached to their menials—Mrs A. full of stories of the sagacity and sense of the little girl in the kitchen. Mr A. high in the praises of an African, his house-servant—all his people old in his service—Douglas's old nurse came to Berrywell yesterday, to remind them of its being his birthday.

'A Mr Dudgeon, a poet at times, a worthy, remarkable character—natural penetration, a great deal of information, some genius, and extreme modesty.

[Mr Dudgeon was the author of a Scottish song of merit, entitled, *The Maid that tends the Goats*.]

'*Sunday* [*May* 6.]—Went to church at Dunse—Dr Bowmaker a man of strong lungs and pretty judicious remark; but ill skilled in propriety, and altogether unconscious of his want of it.'

['During the discourse, Burns produced a neat impromptu, conveying an elegant compliment to Miss Ainslie. Dr Bowmaker had selected a text of Scripture that contained a heavy denunciation against obstinate sinners. In the course of the sermon, Burns observed the young lady turning over the leaves of her Bible with much earnestness in search of the text. He took out a slip of paper, and with a pencil wrote the following lines on it, which he immediately presented to her:—

Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
  Nor idle texts pursue:
'Twas *guilty sinners* that he meant—
  Not *angels* such as you!'[2]]

'*Monday* [*May* 7.]—Coldstream—went over to England—Cornhill—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge.'

[An anecdote *apropos* to this point was communicated by Mr Ainslie to a popular publication many years afterwards. 'The weather was charming, the travellers youthful and in good spirits, and the poet delighted with the fine scenery and the poetical

[1] 'At Eden, near Banff, Aberdeenshire, 19th September 1850, Douglas Ainslie, Esq., of Cairnbank, Berwickshire, in the eightieth year of his age.'—*Newspaper Obituary*.

[2] Cromek.

associations connected with it. When they arrived at Coldstream, where the dividing-line between England and Scotland is the Tweed, Mr Ainslie suggested going across to the other side of the river by the Coldstream bridge, that Burns might be enabled to say he had been in England. They did so, and were pacing slowly along on English ground, enjoying their walk, when Mr Ainslie was surprised to see the poet throw away his hat, and thus uncovered, kneel down with uplifted hands, and apparently rapt in a fit of enthusiasm. Mr Ainslie kept silence, uncertain what was next to be done, when Burns, with extreme emotion, and an expression of countenance which his companion could never forget, prayed for and blessed Scotland most solemnly, by pronouncing aloud, in tones of the deepest devotion, the two concluding stanzas of the *Cotter's Saturday Night:*

"Oh Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And oh! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

Oh Thou! who poured the patriotic tide,
That streamed through Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly Thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
Oh never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!" '][1]

'Dine at Coldstream with Mr Ainslie and Mr Foreman—beat Mr F. in a dispute about Voltaire. Tea at Lennel House with Mr Brydone [author of *A Tour in Sicily and Malta.*]—Mr Brydone a most excellent heart, kind, joyous, and benevolent, but a good deal of the French indiscriminate complaisance—from his situation past and present, an admirer of everything that bears a splendid title, or that possesses a large estate [Mr B. had travelled as preceptor to several men of rank.]—Mrs Brydone [a daughter of Dr Robertson the historian] a most elegant woman in her person and manners; the tones of her voice remarkably sweet—my reception extremely flattering—sleep at Coldstream.'

[1] *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, April 28, 1832.

[Many years after, Scott came in like manner as a visitor to Mr Brydone, and his record of the venerable traveller is worth quoting in connection with Burns's:—

'Stung with these thoughts, he urged to speed
His troop, and reached at eve the Tweed,
Where Lennel's convent closed their march
(There now is left but one frail arch,
Yet mourn thou not its cells;
Our time a fair exchange has made;
Hard by, in hospitable shade,
A reverend pilgrim dwells,
Well worth the whole Bernardine brood,
That e'er wore sandal, frock, or hood.')—*Marmion.*]

'*Tuesday* [*May* 8.]—Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of Kelso—fine bridge over the Tweed—enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, particularly the Scotch side; introduced to Mr Scott of the Royal Bank, an excellent, modest fellow—fine situation of it—ruins of Roxburgh Castle—a holly-bush growing where James II. of Scotland was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by an English Hottentot—a *maître d'hotel* of the duke's, a Mr Cole. Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads. Turnip and sheep husbandry, their great improvements. Mr M'Dowal at Caverton Mill, a friend of Mr Ainslie's, with whom I dined to-day, sold his sheep, ewe and lamb together, at two guineas apiece. Wash their sheep before shearing —7 or 8 lbs. of washing-wool in a fleece—low markets, consequently low rents—fine lands not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre—magnificence of farmers and farmhouses.' [Farms in Roxburgh and Berwickshire were then, as now, on a large scale, in comparison with the bard's native county.] 'Come up Teviot and up Jed to Jedburgh to lie [that is, to sleep, or lodge], and so wish myself a good-night.

'*Wednesday* [*May* 9.]—Breakfast with Mr ——, in Jedburgh—a squabble between Mrs ——, a crazed, talkative slattern, and a sister of hers, an old maid, respecting a Relief minister. Miss gives Madam the lie; and Madam, by way of revenge, upbraids her that she laid snares to entangle the said minister, then a widower, in the net of matrimony. Go about two miles out of Jedburgh to a roup of parks—meet a polite soldier-like gentleman, Captain Rutherford, who had been many years through the wilds of America, a prisoner among the Indians. Charming, romantic

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] ladies, to be [illegible] scenes. Introduced to [illegible] Mr Somerville, the [illegible] gentleman, but sadly addicted [illegible] History of England [illegible] William and [illegible] the father-in-law of [illegible] After the appearance of [illegible] poet, he suddenly and [illegible] walking-party of ladies. Mrs [illegible] and Miss [illegible] her sister [illegible] mentioned. N B —These [illegible] more [illegible] ugly and stupid, and bore me [illegible] Miss —— [illegible] agreeable. Miss Hope, a [illegible] pretty girl fond of laughing and fun. Miss Lindsay, a good-humoured, [illegible] girl rather short of *embonpoint*, but handsome, [illegible] full of spirit, and [illegible] face—*un tout ensemble* [illegible] of female minds—her sister, a bonnie, strapping, rosy, [illegible] lass. Shake myself loose, after several unsuccessful efforts, of Mrs —— and Miss ——, and, somehow or other, get hold of Miss Lindsay's arm. My heart is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. Miss seems very well pleased with my bardship's distinguishing her, and after some slight qualms, which I could easily mark, she sets the tittery round at defiance, and kindly allows me to keep my hold; and when parted by the ceremony of my introduction to Mr Somerville, she met me half, to resume my situation. *Nota Bene.* The poet within a point and a half of being [illegible] in love. I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as much tinder as ever.

[illegible] old, cross grained, Whiggish, ugly, slanderous Miss ——, [illegible] the poisonous spleen of a disappointed, ancient maid, stops [illegible] unseasonably to ease her bursting breast, by falling

abusively foul on the Miss Lindsays, particularly on my Dulcinea —I hardly refrain from cursing her to her face, for daring to mouth her calumnious slander on one of the finest pieces of the workmanship of Almighty Excellence! Sup at Mr ——'s; vexed that the Miss Lindsays are not of the supper-party, as they only are wanting. Mrs —— and Miss —— still improve infernally on my hands.

'Set out next morning for Wauchope, the seat of my correspondent, Mrs Scott[1]—breakfast by the way with Dr Elliot, an agreeable, good-hearted, climate-beaten old veteran, in the medical line, now retired to a romantic, but rather moorish place, on the banks of the Rule—he accompanies us almost to Wauchope—we traverse the country to the top of Bochester, the scene of an old encampment, and Woolee Hill.

'Wauchope.—Mr Scott exactly the figure and face commonly given to Sancho Panza—very shrewd in his farming-matters, and not unfrequently stumbles on what may be called a strong thing rather than a good thing. Mrs Scott all the sense, taste, intrepidity of face, and bold, critical decision, which usually distinguish female authors. Sup with Mr Potts—agreeable party. Breakfast next morning with Mr Somerville—the *bruit* of Miss Lindsay and my bardship, by means of the invention and malice of Miss ——. Mr Somerville sends to Dr Lindsay, begging him and family to breakfast, if convenient, but at all events to send Miss Lindsay; accordingly, Miss Lindsay only comes. I find Miss Lindsay would soon play the devil with me—I met with some little flattering attentions from her. Mrs Somerville an excellent, motherly, agreeable woman, and a fine family. Mr Ainslie and Mrs S——, junr., with Mr ——, Miss Lindsay, and myself, go to see *Esther* [Easton], a very remarkable woman for reciting poetry of all kinds, and sometimes making Scotch doggerel herself—she can repeat by heart almost everything she has ever read, particularly Pope's *Homer* from end to end—has studied *Euclid* by herself; and, in short, is a woman of very extraordinary abilities. On conversing with her, I find her fully equal to the character given of her. She is very much flattered that I send for her, and that she sees a poet who has *put out a book*, as she says. She is, among other things, a great florist, and is rather past the meridian of once celebrated beauty.

'I walk in *Esther's* garden with Miss Lindsay, and after some

[1] See her poetical epistle and Burns's reply, at pp. 27, 28 of this volume.

little chit-chat of the tender kind, I presented her with a proof-print of my *nob*, which she accepted with something more tender than gratitude. She told me many little stories which Miss —— had retailed concerning her and me, with prolonging pleasure—God bless her! Was waited on by the magistrates, and presented with the freedom of the burgh.' [On this occasion the usual treat of a *riddle of claret* was bestowed upon the bard in the inn. Always jealous of his independence, he left the room before the feast was over, and endeavoured to induce the landlord to accept of payment of the bill from *him*. It is scarcely necessary to say, that mine host knew too well what was befitting the dignity of the burgh to take Burns's money.]

'Took farewell of Jedburgh, with some melancholy, disagreeable sensations. Jed, pure be thy crystal streams, and hallowed thy sylvan banks! Sweet Isabella Lindsay, may peace dwell in thy bosom, uninterrupted, except by the tumultuous throbbings of rapturous love! That love-kindling eye must beam on another, not on me—that graceful form must bless another's arms, not mine![1]

'Kelso.—Dine with the Farmers' Club—all gentlemen, talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from £30 to £50 value, and attends the fox-huntings in the county. Go out with Mr Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr Ainslie's, to lie. Mr Ker, a most gentlemanly, clever, handsome fellow, a widower, with some fine children—his mind and manner astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir in Kilmarnock—everything in Mr Ker's most elegant—he offers to accompany me in my English tour. Dine with Sir Alexander Don—a pretty clever fellow, but far from being a match for his divine lady' [Lady Harriet Don, sister of the Earl of Glencairn.] 'A very wet day. . . . . Sleep at Stodrig again, and set out for Melrose—visit Dryburgh, a fine old ruined abbey—still bad weather—cross Leader, and come up Tweed to Melrose—dine there, and visit that far-famed, glorious ruin—come to Selkirk, up Ettrick—the whole country hereabout, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony.'[2]

[1] Isabella Lindsay and her sister lived with their brother, a young surgeon in Jedburgh. Isabella, who was truly worthy in all respects of the bard's panegyric, married Mr Adam Armstrong, who held a situation under the Russian government. She died young, leaving four children; the youngest son is General Robert Armstrong, now director of the Imperial Mint at St Petersburg. Peggy, the younger sister, died not long after the poet's visit, at the age of twenty-two.

[2] 'I have often heard Dr Clarkson tell, with a heavy heart and a loss of all patience with

[It is evident that Burns was disappointed of his intended visit to the Vale of Yarrow, whose 'dowie dens' were of course endeared to him by the ancient popular ballad, as well as by William Hamilton's beautiful modern ditty. Whether he would have pronounced upon it as another great poet, led by the same fancies, afterwards did—

'But thou that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation:
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy'—

can only be matter of conjecture. The rain seems to have forced him—we may be sure reluctantly—to take refuge in the inn at Selkirk.

'Enough if in our hearts we know
There 's such a place as Yarrow.'

The Ettrick, however, which was also to him classical, by virtue of a fine pastoral song, was now in his ken, for it travels by Selkirk town.

The poet seems to have spent the remainder of the day in penning a letter to his publisher, Mr Creech, who had lately left Edinburgh on a visit to London.

TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ.

SELKIRK, 13*th May* 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND—The enclosed I have just wrote, nearly extempore, in a solitary inn in Selkirk, after a miserably wet day's riding. I have been over most of East Lothian, Berwick, Roxburgh,

himself, that when Mr Ainslie and Burns arrived at Selkirk that evening, "they were just like twa droukit craws." The doctor and other two gentlemen were sitting in Veitch's Inn, near the West Port, taking their glass (for Selkirk has a West Port as well as Edinburgh). When the travellers arrived, the two within viewed them out at the window as they alighted, and certainly conceived no very high opinion of them. In a short time, however, they sent Mr Veitch to the doctor and his friends, requesting permission for two strangers to take a glass with them. The doctor objected, and asked Mr Veitch what the men were like? Mr Veitch said he could not well say: the one spoke *rather* like a gentleman, but the other was a drover-looking chap; so they refused to admit them, sending them word that they were sorry they were engaged elsewhere, and obliged to go away. The doctor saw them ride off next morning, and it was not till the third day that he knew it had been the celebrated Scottish poet whom they had refused to admit. That refusal hangs about the doctor's heart like a deadweight to this day, and will do till the day of his death, for the bard had not a more enthusiastic admirer.'—JAMES HOGG, *in his edition of Burns, Fullarton & Co., Glasgow.*

and Selkirk shires, and next week I begin a tour through the north of England. Yesterday, I dined with Lady Harriet, sister to my noble patron, *Quem Deus conservet!* I would write till I would tire you as much with dull prose, as I daresay by this time you are with wretched verse; but I am jaded to death; so, with a grateful farewell, I have the honour to be, good sir, yours sincerely,

R. B.

The enclosed was the following set of verses:—

WILLIE'S AWA'.

Auld chuckie[1] Reekie's[2] sair distrest,
Down droops her ance weel-burnished crest,
Nae joy her bonny buskit nest — decorated
Can yield ava, — at all
Her darling bird that she lo'es best—
Willie's awa'!

Oh Willie was a witty wight,
And had o' things an unco slight; — knowledge
Auld Reekie aye he keepit tight,
And trig and braw:
But now they 'll busk her like a fright—
Willie's awa'!

The stiffest o' them a' he bowed;
The bauldest o' them a' he cowed;
They durst nae mair than he allowed,
That was a law:
We 've lost a birkie weel worth gowd— — fellow
Willie's awa'!

Now gawkies, tawpies, gowks,[3] and fools,
Frae colleges and boarding-schools,
May sprout like simmer puddock-stools
In glen or shaw; — wood
He wha could brush them down to mools— — the dust
Willie's awa'!

[1] Literally, a hen; secondarily, a familiar term of address:

'Gin ony sour-mou'd girning bucky
Ca' me conceited keckling chucky.'—RAMSAY.

[2] Literally, smoky; a familiar sobriquet for Edinburgh, not at all unsuitable.

[3] Gawky, a simpleton; tawpy, usually applied to a foolish, sluttish woman; gowk, literally, the cuckoo; secondarily, a fool.

The brethren o' the Commerce-Chaumer[1]
May mourn their loss wi' doolfu' clamour;
He was a dictionar and grammar
Amang them a';
I fear they 'll now mak monie a stammer—
Willie 's awa'!

Nae mair we see his levee door[2]
Philosophers and poets pour,
And toothy critics by the score,
In bloody raw!
The adjutant o' a' the core—
Willie 's awa'!

Now worthy Gregory's Latin face,
Tytler's and Greenfield's modest grace;
Mackenzie, Stewart, sic a brace
As Rome ne'er saw;
They a' maun meet some ither place—
Willie 's awa'!

Poor Burns—e'en Scotch drink canna quicken,
He cheeps like some bewildered chicken, chirps
Scared frae its minnie and the cleckin' mother—brood
By hoodie-craw;
Grief 's gien his heart an unco kickin'—
Willie 's awa'!

Now every sour-mou'd girnin' blellum— talking fellow
And Calvin's folk, are fit to fell him;
And self-conceited critic skellum[3]
His quill may draw;
He wha could brawlie ward their bellum—
Willie 's awa'!

[1] The Chamber of Commerce at Edinburgh, of which Creech was secretary.

[2] Creech, who, besides being a clever and well-educated man, enjoyed high reputation as a teller of quaint stories, lived on familiar terms with many of the literary men of his day. His house, in one of the elevated floors of a tenement in the High Street, accessible from a wretched alley called Craig's Close, was frequented in the mornings by company of that kind, to such an extent that the meeting used to be called *Creech's Levee*. Burns here enumerates as attending it, Dr James Gregory, author of the *Conspectus Medicinæ*; Alexander Fraser Tytler, afterwards Lord Woodhouselee; Dr William Greenfield, professor of rhetoric in the Edinburgh University; Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*; and Dugald Stewart, professor of moral philosophy.

[3] A term of contempt:

'She tauld thee weel, thou was a skellum.'—*Tam o' Shanter*.

Up wimpling stately Tweed I 've sped, winding
And Eden scenes on crystal Jed,
And Ettrick banks now roaring red,
While tempests blaw;
But every joy and pleasure 's fled—
Willie 's awa'!

May I be Slander's common speech;
A text for infamy to preach;
And lastly, streekit out to bleach
In winter snaw;
When I forget thee, Willie Creech,
Though far awa'!

May never wicked Fortune touzle him! teaze
May never wicked men bamboozle him!
Until a pow as auld 's Methusalem
He canty claw! cheerful
Then to the blessèd New Jerusalem,
Fleet wing awa'!]

'*Monday* [*May* 14].—Come to Inverleithen, a famous spa, and in the vicinity of the palace of Traquair: where, having dined, and drunk some Galloway-whey, I here remain till to-morrow—saw Elibanks and Elibraes, on the other side of the Tweed.'

[Burns, we may well believe, had no motive for making this digression up the Tweed, except to see certain places referred to in Scottish songs. At Inverleithen, where he spent the afternoon and night of Monday, he saw the *Bush aboon Traquair;* a pretty grove on the hill-face, which has been embalmed in verse by his predecessor Crawford:

'Hear me, ye nymphs and every swain,
I 'll tell how Peggy grieves me:
Though thus I languish and complain,
Alas! she ne'er believes me:
My vows and sighs, like silent air,
Unheeded never move her;
The bonny bush aboon Traquair,
'Twas there I first did love her.'

Burns was similarly interested in Elibank, an old castle situated amongst hanging woods, because of an old free-spoken song, the burden of which is 'Elibank and Elibraes.' Such were the fancies which led him into twenty-mile digressions on this tour.]

'*Tuesday*.—Drank tea yesternight at Pirn with Mr Horsburgh. Breakfasted to-day with Mr Ballantyne of Hollylee. Proposal

for a four-horse team, to consist of Mr Scott of Wauchope, Fittieland; Logan of Logan, Fittiefur; Ballantyne of Hollylee, Forewynd; Horsburgh of Horsburgh. Dine at a country inn, kept by a miller in Earlston, the birthplace and residence of the celebrated Thomas à Rhymer—saw the ruins of his castle—come to Berrywell.' [Though he takes no notice of the circumstance, his reason for this detour by Earlston was his desire to see the Cowdenknowes, famous in old song.]

'*Wednesday.*—Dine at Dunse with the Farmers' Club—company, impossible to do them justice—Rev. Mr Smith, a famous punster, and Mr Meikle, a celebrated mechanic, and inventor of the thrashing-mill. *Thursday.*—Breakfast at Berrywell, and walk into Dunse to see a famous knife made by a cutler there, and to be presented to an Italian prince. A pleasant ride with my friend Mr Robert Ainslie, and his sister, to Mr Thomson's, a man who has newly commenced farmer, and has married a Miss Patty Grieve, formerly a flame of Mr Robert Ainslie's. Company, Miss Jacky Grieve, an amiable sister of Mrs Thomson's, and Mr Hood, an honest, worthy, facetious farmer in the neighbourhood.'

[A letter written at Berrywell gives some curious particulars regarding his volume: it is addressed to a Paisley manufacturer, whom the bard playfully styles 'bookseller,' with reference to his success in disposing of a considerable number of copies of the recently published volume:

TO MR PATTISON, BOOKSELLER, PAISLEY.

BERRYWELL, *near Dunse, May* 17, 1787.

DEAR SIR—I am sorry I was out of Edinburgh, making a slight pilgrimage to the classic scenes of this country, when I was favoured with yours of the 11th instant, enclosing an order of the Paisley Banking Company on the Royal Bank for Twenty-two pounds seven shillings sterling, payment in full, after carriage deducted, for ninety copies of my book I sent you. According to your motions, I see you will have left Scotland before this reaches you, otherwise I would send you *Holy Willie* with all my heart. I was so hurried, that I absolutely forgot several things I ought to have minded; among the rest, sending books to Mr Cowan; but any order of yours will be answered at Creech's shop. You will please remember that non-subscribers pay six shillings, this is Creech's profit; but those who have subscribed, though their names have been neglected in the printed list, which is very incorrect, are supplied at the subscription-price. I was not at Glasgow, nor do I intend for London; and I think Mrs Fame is very idle to tell so many lies on a poor poet. When you or Mr Cowan write for copies, if you

should want any, direct to Mr Hill, at Mr Creech's shop, and I write to Mr Hill by this post, to answer either of your orders. Hill is Mr Creech's first clerk, and Creech himself is presently in London. I suppose I shall have the pleasure, against your return to Paisley, of assuring you how much I am, dear sir, your obliged humble servant, R. B.

A young man named Symon Gray, the son of a respectable citizen of Dunse, had addicted himself to the unprofitable service of the Muse, and hearing of the Ayrshire bard being at Berrywell, he took the liberty of sending a specimen of his verse for Burns's opinion. The poet gave it a hasty perusal, and returned it with merely the remark:

Symon Gray,
You 're dull to-day.

Symon, not abashed, immediately sent a fresh packet, which the poet as quickly returned, with an inscription on the outside:

Dulness, with redoubled sway,
Has seized the wits of Symon Gray.

We can imagine all this being done with the cognizance of the clever circle at Berrywell, and somewhat to their amusement, Gray being doubtless known as a bore by his fellow-citizens. Strange to say, two rebuffs were insufficient to take the edge from Symon's vanity, and he sent a third packet containing several of his most elaborate performances. It came too late to admit of Burns paying it any immediate attention, as he was about to proceed on an excursion to the eastern parts of the country; but on his return a few days after to Berrywell, he took it up, and gave its author the *coup-de-grace*, as follows:—

DEAR SYMON GRAY,

The other day,
When you sent me some rhyme,
I could not then just ascertain
Its worth, for want of time.
But now to-day, good Mr Gray,
I 've read it o'er and o'er,
Tried all my skill, but find I 'm still
Just where I was before.
We auld wives' minions, gie our opinions,
Solicited or no;
Then of its faults my honest thoughts
I 'll give—and here they go.

* * * *

We can scarcely present before good company the opinion of

the bard in its entire form; but the reader will have an idea of its general bearing from one passage:

Such damned bombast no age that's past
Will shew, or time to come.]

'*Friday*.—Ride to Berwick—an idle town, rudely picturesque. Meet Lord Errol in walking round the walls—his lordship's flattering notice of me. Dine with Mr Clunzie, merchant—nothing particular in company or conversation. Come up a bold shore, and over a wild country, to Eyemouth—sup and sleep at Mr Grieve's.

'*Saturday*.—Spend the day at Mr Grieve's—made a Royal-arch Mason of St Abb's Lodge. Mr William Grieve, the eldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow—takes a hearty glass, and sings a good song. Mr Robert, his brother, and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little. Take a sail after dinner. Fishing of all kinds pays tithes at Eyemouth.'

[The entry made on this occasion in the lodge-books is as follows:—

'EYEMOUTH, 19*th May* 1787.

At a general encampment held this day, the following brethren were made Royal-arch Masons—namely, Robert Burns, from the Lodge of St James's, Tarbolton, Ayrshire, and Robert Ainslie, from the Lodge of St Luke's, Edinburgh, by James Carmichael, Wm. Grieve, Daniel Dow, John Clay, Robert Grieve, &c. &c. Robert Ainslie paid one guinea admission-dues; but on account of R. Burns's remarkable poetical genius, the encampment unanimously agreed to admit him gratis, and considered themselves honoured by having a man of such shining abilities for one of their companions.'

It is somewhat surprising that Burns makes no allusion in his journal to a hearty country-gentleman of this neighbourhood, with whom, undoubtedly, he was at some period of his life acquainted—namely, Mr Renton of Lamerton. At Mordington House, the seat of this gentleman, near Berwick, he would have been sure of a cordial welcome. There is some reason to think that Mr Renton attempted, on this very occasion, to form an appointment with Burns for a meeting and a ride together, for a note in the bard's handwriting has been found among Mr Renton's papers:—

Your billet, sir, I grant receipt;
Wi' you I 'll canter ony gate, any way
Though 'twere a trip to yon blue warl',
Whare birkies march on burning marl:
Then, sir, God willing, I 'll attend ye,
And to his goodness I commend ye.—R. BURNS.]

'*Sunday* [*May* 20].—A Mr Robinson, brewer at Ednam, sets out with us to Dunbar.

'The Miss Grieves very good girls. My bardship's heart got a brush from Miss Betsy.

'Mr William Grieve's attachment to the family circle; so fond, that when he is out, which, by the by, is often the case, he cannot go to bed till he see if all his sisters are sleeping well. Pass the famous Abbey of Coldingham, and Pease-bridge. Call at Mr Sheriff's, where Mr A. and I dine. Mr S. talkative and conceited. I talk of love to Nancy the whole evening, while her brother escorts home some companions like himself. Sir James Hall of Dunglass, having heard of my being in the neighbourhood, comes to Mr Sheriff's to breakfast—takes me to see his fine scenery on the stream of Dunglass—Dunglass the most romantic sweet place I ever saw—Sir James and his lady a pleasant happy couple. He points out a walk for which he has an uncommon respect, as it was made by an aunt of his, to whom he owes much.[1]

'Miss —— will accompany me to Dunbar, by way of making a parade of me as a sweetheart of hers among her relations. She mounts an old cart-horse, as huge and as lean as a house; a rusty old side-saddle, without girth or stirrup, but fastened on with an old pillion-girth—herself as fine as hands could make her, in cream-coloured riding-clothes, hat and feather, &c. I, ashamed of my situation, ride like the devil, and almost shake her to pieces on old Jolly—get rid of her by refusing to call at her uncle's with her.

'Passed through the most glorious corn country I ever saw, till I reached Dunbar, a neat little town. Dine with Provost Fall, an eminent merchant, and most respectable character, but undescribable, as he exhibits no marked traits. Mrs Fall a genius in painting; fully more clever in the fine arts and sciences than my friend Lady Wauchope, without her consummate assurance of her own abilities. Call with Mr Robinson (whom, by the by, I find to be a worthy, much respected man, very modest; warm, social heart, which with less good sense than his would be, perhaps, with the children of prim precision and pride, rather inimical to that respect which is man's due from man)—with him I call on Miss Clarke, a maiden, in the Scotch phrase, *guid enough, but no brent new:* a clever woman, with tolerable pretensions to remark

[1] Sir James Hall was a distinguished cultivator of Huttonian geology in its earlier days, and wrote several ingenious scientific papers. He was the father of Captain Basil Hall, so well known by his many popular books.

and wit; while time had blown the blushing bud of bashful modesty into the flower of easy confidence. She wanted to see what sort of *raree-show* an author was; and to let him know, that though Dunbar was but a little town, yet it was not destitute of people of parts.

'Breakfast next morning at Skateraw, at Mr Lee's, a farmer of great note. Mr Lee an excellent, hospitable, social fellow, rather oldish—warm-hearted and chatty—a most judicious, sensible farmer. Mr Lee detains me till next morning. Company at dinner: my rev. acquaintance Dr Bowmaker, a rattling old fellow; two sea-lieutenants; a cousin of the landlord's, a fellow whose looks are of that kind which deceived me in a gentleman at Kelso, and have often deceived me—a goodly handsome figure and face, which incline one to give them credit for parts which they have not; Mr Clarke a much cleverer fellow, but whose looks a little cloudy, and his appearance rather ungainly, with an everyday observer may prejudice the opinion against him; Dr Brown, a medical young gentleman from Dunbar, a fellow whose face and manners are open and engaging. Leave Skateraw for Dunse next day, along with Collector ——, a lad of slender abilities, and bashfully diffident to an extreme.

'Found Miss Ainslie—the amiable, the sensible, the good-humoured, the sweet Miss Ainslie—all alone at Berrywell. Heavenly powers, who know the weakness of human hearts, support mine! What happiness must I see, only to remind me that I cannot enjoy it!

'Lammermuir Hills, from East Lothian to Dunse, very wild. Dine with the Farmers' Club at Kelso. Sir John Hume and Mr Lumsden there, but nothing worth remembrance when the following circumstance is considered—I walk into Dunse before dinner, and out to Berrywell in the evening with Miss Ainslie—how well-bred, how frank, how good she is! Charming Rachel! may thy bosom never be wrung by the evils of this life of sorrows, or by the villainy of this world's sons!'[1] [From this point Burns loses the company of Mr Robert Ainslie, who returned to Edinburgh.]

'*Thursday* [*May* 24].—Mr Ker and I set out to dinner at Mr Hood's on our way to England.

'I am taken extremely ill, with strong feverish symptoms, and take a servant of Mr Hood's to watch me all night—imbittering

[1] Miss Ainslie died unmarried. I remember meeting her about forty years after her acquaintance with Burns—a good-looking elderly lady, of very agreeable manners.

remorse scares my fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death. I am determined to live for the future in such a manner as not to be scared at the approach of death—I am sure I could meet him with indifference, but for "the something beyond the grave." Mr Hood agrees to accompany us to England if we will wait till Sunday.

'*Friday.*—I go with Mr Hood to see a roup of an unfortunate farmer's stock—rigid economy, and decent industry, do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis persona* in such a scene of horror!

'Meet my good old friend Mr Ainslie, who calls on Mr Hood in the evening to take farewell of my bardship. This day I feel myself warm with sentiments of gratitude to the Great Preserver of men, who has kindly restored me to health and strength once more.

'A pleasant walk with my young friend Douglas Ainslie—a sweet, modest, clever young fellow.

'*Sunday* [*May* 27].—Cross Tweed, and traverse the moors, through a wild country, till I reach Alnwick—Alnwick Castle, a seat of the Duke of Northumberland, furnished in a most princely manner. A Mr Wilkin, agent of his Grace's, shews us the house and policies. Mr Wilkin a discreet, sensible, ingenious man.

'*Monday.*—Come, still through by-ways, to Warkworth, where we dine. Hermitage an old castle. Warkworth situated very picturesquely, with Coquet Island, a small rocky spot, the seat of an old monastery, facing it a little in the sea, and the small but romantic river Coquet running through it. Sleep at Morpeth, a pleasant enough little town, and on next day to Newcastle. Meet with a very agreeable, sensible fellow, a Mr Chattox, who shews us a great many civilities, and who dines and sups with us.

'*Wednesday.*—Left Newcastle early in the morning, and rode over a fine country to Hexham to breakfast—from Hexham to Wardrew, the celebrated spa, where we slept. *Thursday* [*May* 31].—Reach Longtown to dine, and part there with my good friends, Messrs Hood and Ker. A hiring-day in Longtown. I am uncommonly happy to see so many young folks enjoying life. I come to Carlisle. (Meet a strange enough romantic adventure by the way, in falling in with a girl and her married sister. The girl, after some overtures of gallantry on my side, sees me a little cut with the bottle, and offers to take me in for a Gretna Green affair. I, not being quite such a gull as she imagines, make an appointment with her, by way of *vive la bagatelle,* to hold a conference

on it when we reach town. I meet her in town, and give her a brush of caressing and a bottle of cider; but finding herself *un peu trompée* in her man, she sheers off.) Next day [*June* 1] I meet my good friend Mr Mitchell, and walk with him round the town and its environs, and through his printing-works, &c.—four or five hundred people employed, many of them women and children. Dine with Mr Mitchell, and leave Carlisle. Come by the coast to Annan. Overtaken on the way by a curious old fish of a shoemaker, and miner, from Cumberland mines.'

[*Here the manuscript abruptly terminates.*]

In the following letter, we for the first time encounter the name of Mr William Nicol of the High School, though Burns must have been for some time acquainted with him. The friendship and admiration which the poet entertained for Nicol, has been usually regarded as one of the least intelligible circumstances of this portion of his life, for all contemporary report describes the pedagogue as a man of extraordinary rudeness, albeit gifted with some ability. Burns's letter is written in a broad vernacular, which he must have expected to be pleasing to Nicol:—

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL,

MASTER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

CARLISLE, *June* 1, 1787,
(*or, I believe, the* 39*th o' May rather.*)

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE—I 'm sitten' doun here, after seven-and-forty miles' ridin', e'en as forjeskit and forniaw'd as a forfochten cock, to gie you some notion o' my land-lowper-like stravaigin sin' the sorrowfu' hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' Auld Reekie.

My auld, ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchyall'd up hill and down brae, in Scotland and England, as teugh and birnie as a very devil wi' me. It 's true she 's as poor 's a sangmaker, and as hard 's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate, just like a lady's gentle-woman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle; but she 's a yauld, poutherie girran for a' that, and has a stomach like Willie Stalker's meere, that wad hae disgeested tumbler-wheels, for she 'll whip me aff her five stimparts o' the best aits at a down-sittin', and ne'er fash her thumb. When ance her ringbanes and spavies, her crucks and cramps, are fairly soupl'd, she beets to, beets to, and aye the hindmost hour the tightest. I could wager her price to a threttie pennies, that for twa or three ooks' ridin' at fifty mile a day, the

deil-sticket a five gallopers acqueesh Clyde and Whithorn could cast saut on her tail.[1]

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dunbar to Selcraig, and hae forgather'd wi' monie a guid fallow, and monie a weel-far'd hizzie. I met wi' twa dink queynes in particular, ane o' them, a sonsie, fine, fodgel lass, baith braw and bonny: the tither was a clean-shankit, straught, tight, weel-far'd wench, as blythe 's a lint-white on a flowerie thorn, and as sweet and modest 's a new-blawn plum-rose in a hazle shaw. They were baith bred to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane o' them had as muckle smeddum and rumble-gumption as the half o' some presbyteries that you and I baith ken. They played me sic a deevil o' a shavie, that I daur say, if my harrigals were turned out, ye wad see twa nicks i' the heart o' me like the mark o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

I was gaun to write you a lang pystle, but, Guid forgie me, I gat mysel' sae notouriously bitchify'd the day, after kail-time, that I can hardly stoiter but an' ben.

My best respecks to the guidwife and a' our common friens, especiall Mr and Mrs Cruikshank, and the honest guidman o' Jock's Lodge.

I 'll be in Dumfries the morn, gif the beast be to the fore and the branks bide hale. Guid be wi' you, Willie! Amen! R. B.

[Anglice, thus:—

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE—I have sat down here, after forty-seven miles' hard riding, even as jaded and fatigued as an overfought cock, to give you some notion of my vagabond-like wandering since the sorrowful hour that I shook hands and parted with Auld Reekie [Edinburgh].

My old galled mare has hobbled up hill and down slope in Scotland and England, as tough and lively as a very devil with me. It is true she is as poor as a song-maker, and as hard as a church, and totters when she takes the road, just like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuet, or a hen on a hot oven; but she is an alert, spirited beast notwithstanding, and has a stomach like Willie Stalker's mare, that would have digested cart-wheels, for she 'll whip me off five-eighths of a Winchester bushel of the best oats at a time, with no sort of difficulty. When once her ill-assorted joints and spavins, her lameness and cramps, are fairly suppled, she improves by little and little, and always the last hour is her best. I could wager her price against twopence-halfpenny, that for two-three weeks' riding

[1] This wonderful beast had been named Jenny Geddes by the poet, with some reference to the old woman so named, to whom tradition assigns the credit of having cast the first stool at the dean's head in St Giles's Church, July 23, 1637, when the liturgy imposed on Scotland by Charles I. was first read. I suspect that some jocular circumstance was referred to in the beast's christening.

at fifty miles a day, the devil a galloper between Clyde and Whithorn could cast salt on her tail.

I have sauntered over the whole country from Dunbar to Selkirk, and have met with many a good fellow and many a well-favoured maiden. I met with two neat girls, in particular, one of them a fine, plump, comfortable-looking lass, well dressed and pretty; the other a well-limbed, straight, tight, well-favoured wench, as blithe as a linnet on a flowering thorn, and as sweet and modest as a new-blown primrose in a hazel-wood. They had both acquired manners from the book, and any one of them had as much smartness and sense as the half of some presbyteries that you and I know of. They played me such a devil of a prank, that if my viscera were turned out, you would see two nicks in the heart of me, like the mark of a knife in a cabbage-stalk.

I was going to write a long epistle; but, God forgive me, I got myself so dreadfully besotted to-day, after dinner, that I can hardly crawl from one room to another.

My best respects to your lady and all our common friends, especially Mr and Mrs Cruikshanks, and the honest goodman of Jock's Lodge.

I shall be in Dumfries to-morrow, if the beast survive and the bridle keep whole. God be with you, Willie! Amen!]

After a brief sojourn in Dumfries, he proceeded to Dalswinton, the estate of Mr Patrick Miller, who, it will be remembered, had expressed a wish to see the poet settled on one of his farms. Burns must have admired the general scenery—a noble stream, as pure as crystal, flowing through fine haughs and slopes, backed by lofty hills; but the state of the estate could scarcely afford much food for his professional hopes, for it was at this time, even by the confession of its owner, exceedingly bad. Burns would see how much the grounds were out of heart, and ask if it was to be his fate to sow the profits of his Muse upon these stony fields. He seems to have lingered about a week in the district. Proceeding at length by Sanquhar to Mauchline, he arrived there on the 9th of June. 'It will easily be conceived,' says Dr Currie, 'with what pleasure and pride he was received by his mother, his brothers, and sisters. He had left them poor, and comparatively friendless; he returned to them high in public estimation, and easy in his circumstances. He returned to them unchanged in his ardent affections, and ready to share with them to the uttermost farthing the pittance that fortune had bestowed.' Mrs Begg remembers the arrival of her brother. He came in unheralded, and was in the midst of them before they knew. It was a quiet meeting—for as formerly remarked, the Mossgiel family

had the true Scottish reticence or reserve; but though their words were not 'mony feck,'[1] their feelings were strong. I could not, however, pretend to speak with any precision of the emotions of even a rustic and unlettered mother, on the first embrace of a son whose country had just invested his brows with the imperishable laurel.

Burns seems to have taken an early opportunity of calling at Mr Armour's, professedly to see his little daughter there; and his reception was more cordial than he desired. This appears from a letter to Smith, who had now left Mauchline:—

TO MR JAMES SMITH, LINLITHGOW.

MAUCHLINE, 11*th June* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—I date this from Mauchline, where I arrived on Friday evening last. I slept at John Dow's, and called for my daughter; Mr Hamilton and family; your mother, sister, and brother; my quondam Eliza,[2] &c.—all, all well. If anything had been wanting to disgust me completely at Armour's family, their mean, servile compliance would have done it. Give me a spirit like my favourite hero, Milton's Satan—

'Hail! horrors, hail!
Infernal world! and thou, profoundest hell,
Receive thy new possessor! one who brings
A mind not to be changed by *place* or *time!*'

I cannot settle to my mind. Farming—the only thing of which I know anything, and Heaven above knows but little do I understand even of that—I cannot, dare not risk, on farms as they are. If I do not fix, I will go for Jamaica. Should I stay in an unsettled state at home, I would only dissipate my little fortune, and ruin what I intend shall compensate my little ones for the stigma I have brought on their names. R. B.

There is a sudden access of bitterness here. We have presently more of it:

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL.

MAUCHLINE, *June* 18, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I am now arrived safe in my native country, after a very agreeable jaunt, and have the pleasure to find all my friends well. I breakfasted with your gray-headed, reverend friend, Mr Smith; and was highly pleased both with the cordial welcome he gave me, and his most excellent appearance and sterling good sense.

[1] 'My words they were na *mony feck*.'—*Old Scottish Song.*

[2] Eliza Miller had probably by this time become Mrs Templeton.

I have been with Mr Miller at Dalswinton, and am to meet him again in August. From my view of the lands, and his reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended; but still they are but slender.

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks—Mr Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, Guid forgie me! I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account! Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good-humour, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart: in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the civility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, Satan. 'Tis true I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith; that noxious planet, so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hair-brained whims, like so many *ignes-fatui* eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop, 'he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again.' God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me! But should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have in life, I have felt along the lines, and, damn them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me 'through good report and bad report' —the love which Solomon emphatically says 'is strong as death.' My compliments to Mrs Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

P.S.—I shall be in Edinburgh about the latter end of July.

R. B.

'There are few of his letters,' says Mr Lockhart with regard to this, 'in which more of the dark places of his spirit come to light.' The idea strongly occurs to me: If such be all the gratitude,

patience, or resignation, which a man of extraordinary talent and sense can shew after being raised from almost the lowest poverty and the gloomiest prospects to a position comparatively brilliant, what are we to expect of the multitude of the miserable poor who go on from day to day without a 'blue bore' in their sky,[1] or a single comfort to cheer their cold firesides? But perhaps it would be wrong to discuss the letter as anything but an effusion of transient vexation of spirit, arising from accidental and passing circumstances.

Though he had been effectually separated, or, it might be said, divorced from Jean Armour, and was much incensed by her conduct and that of her relatives, he had never been able to detach her from his heart. Gusts of passion for different individuals had passed through his bosom, even while resting in what he called 'the Greenland bay of indifference' in Edinburgh; but still the image of the simple Mauchline girl resided at the core, and would not quit its place. On now returning to his rustic retreat, and accidentally meeting her, his ancient flames were revived, and he was welcomed to her father's house. In a very short time the pair became as intimate as ever. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the poet was received with open arms by Mr Hamilton and other friends.

The latter part of the month appears to have been devoted to a short Highland tour, of which we have only an imperfect and obscure account. Dr Currie says that, having remained with his friends at Mauchline a few days, 'he proceeded again to Edinburgh, and immediately set out on a journey to the Highlands;' but 'no particulars of the tour have been found among his manuscripts.' It is nearly certain that Burns did not visit Edinburgh on this occasion. Mrs Begg thinks he went first to Glasgow, from which he sent home a present to his mother and three sisters; namely, a quantity of *mode silk*, sufficient to make a bonnet and cloak to each, and a gown besides to his mother and youngest sister, the whole being a recognition of their title to a share of his good-fortune. Mrs Begg remembers going for rather more than a week to Ayr, to assist in the making-up of these dresses; and when she came back on a Saturday, he had returned, and she recollects being requested by him to put on her dress, that he might see how smart she looked in it. Almost the only other certain trace we have of Burns in this

[1] 'At once a proclamation comes out in farre other strain from the former. . . . . It was *the first blew bore* that did appear in our cloudie sky: we took it for a beginning of a reall change in the king's councills.'—*Baillie's Letters*, 1639.

trip is in the West Highlands. To this district he might be drawn by his feelings regarding Mary Campbell. It is not unlikely that he visited her relations at Greenock. Imagination fondly pauses to behold him stretched on her grave in the *West Kirk Yard*, bewailing her untimely severance from his arms. On these points, however, we have only conjecture, and the somewhat remarkable circumstance, that this tour commences with a sort of mystery much like that with which he has contrived to invest the whole story of Highland Mary.

We light upon him first with certainty at Inverary, where he was unlucky; for the Duke of Argyle had an overabundance of guests in the castle, and the innkeeper was too much occupied with the surplus to have any attention to spare for passing travellers. Hereupon he penned an epigram, which it is to be supposed he left inscribed on one of the windows:—

ON INCIVILITY SHEWN HIM AT INVERARY.

Whoe'er he be that sojourns here,
  I pity much his case,
Unless he come to wait upon
  The Lord their God—his Grace.

There 's naething here but Highland pride,
  And Highland scab and hunger;
If Providence has sent me here,
  'Twas surely in an anger.

We must regret this as a discourtesy towards a most respectable nobleman—the more so, as the names of the Duke and Duchess of Argyle stand at the head of the subscription for his Poems; but when did genius ever learn to measure or control its feelings? We next have authentic accounts of the bard on the route southwards. It is by no means inconsistent with our conjecture as to Highland Mary, that we find the poet indulging at the end of his tour in conviviality and frolic carried to the borders of extravagance.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ARROCHAR, BY LOCH LONG, *June* 28 [27 ?], 1787.

I write you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary; to-morrow night's stage, Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins.

Burns appears to have returned home by Paisley. In a letter, dated May 29, 1847, and inserted in the *Liverpool Mercury*, the writer, who signs himself J. T.,[1] gives an account of some circumstances connected with the poet's brief stay at that place. It must have been, he says, on Friday the 29th of June, about noon, that Dr John Taylor of Paisley, who had been charmed with the poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman, readily recognised him from his portrait, as he stood in the street with his friend Mr Alexander Pattison. Having induced both Burns and Pattison to go to his house, notwithstanding some hesitation on the poet's part, who expressed himself as eager to proceed on his journey, Dr Taylor entered into conversation on what was with himself a favourite subject—poetry. 'Burns made the observation, that "perhaps people were ready to attach more merit to poetry than was its due, for that, after all, it was only natural ideas expressed in melodious words;" to which his host assented, and in illustration remarked, that "Nothing was more common than for children in a winter's night to say: 'What will become of the puir birdies the nicht?' But what says the poet?

'Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cower thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?'

The compliment pleased: Burns started on his feet, and bowing, expressed his thanks for the obliging quotation." After this, Burns seemed to forget the haste which he had before alleged; the conversation became animated, and, as it appeared, to each interesting. Burns spoke of his reception at Edinburgh, and dwelt much on the kindness which he had experienced from the Earl of Glencairn, shewing a ring that he wore, a gift from that nobleman. However fond Burns was of the produce of his Muse, the other was probably no less so of his young family, who were all summoned to give their attendance. One of the children, a fat chubby boy, the poet took on his knee, and said "he would make an excellent subject for a poem;" an idea which the father assured him he should be highly gratified to see carried into effect. An elder one was sent for, and desired to go in; but from the great talk he had heard about poets, and particularly about Poet Burns, this one did not feel well assured that it was safe for him to trust his

[1] Mr John Taylor, cotton-broker, Liverpool.

person within the poet's clutches. He, therefore, watched his opportunity, and ventured merely to pass from one door to another through the room, taking the best look he could of the poet, as he stood up with a small black profile of Mrs Taylor's in his hand, which he was then examining. The small black profiles, since called Silhouettes, were then coming into fashion. From that time, although the observer was then hardly more than a child, the remembrance of the poet's figure, face, and general appearance, has never been lost; the recollection of him is distinct, and is that of a big, stout, athletic man, of a brown, ruddy complexion, broad-chested, erect, and standing firmly on his legs, which perhaps were rather clumsy, though hid in yellow topped-boots. His dress was a blue coat and buckskin breeches, and his *caste* seemed what we should now style that of a gentleman-farmer. The impression made by the poet on his host was highly favourable, but the lady was struck with a certain gloominess that seemed to have possession of his countenance and general bearing.'

A letter written immediately after he reached home to James Smith, gives some droll particulars of the latter part of his Highland tour. He had been a night at Arrochar, near the head of Loch Long—had dined next day on Loch Lomond side—and spent a night at Dumbarton, finding or making social merriment everywhere. There is but the faintest, and that, after all, only a conjectural trace, of the individuals he met on this occasion. His friend Kennedy, formerly of Dumfries House in Ayrshire, but now probably settled in this district, is the person most likely to have been the means of introducing him in that Highland circle, and there can scarcely be a doubt that a Mr M'Aulay, a solicitor or writer in Dumbarton, was amongst his entertainers.[1] The only further trace we have of the acquaintance with the latter gentleman, is in a letter addressed to him in June 1789.

TO MR JAMES SMITH.

June 30, 1787.

On our return, at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid formal movements; the ladies sang Scotch songs like angels,

[1] 'Mr M'Aulay had purchased some acres called the Ferrylands of Cardross, which are separated from Dumbarton only by the river Leven, and it was in a house which he built there, and called Leven Grove, that he was visited by Burns.'—*H. W. C.*

at intervals; then we flew at *Bab at the Bowster, Tullochgorum, Loch Erroch-side,*[1] &c., like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or craws prognosticating a storm in a hairst-day. When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six; except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Ben Lomond. We all kneeled; our worthy landlord's son held the bowl, each man a full glass in his hand; and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense, like Thomas-à-Rhymer's prophecies, I suppose. After a small refreshment of the gifts of Somnus, we proceeded to spend the day on Loch Lomond, and reached Dumbarton in the evening. We dined at another good fellow's house, and consequently pushed the bottle; when we went out to mount our horses, we found ourselves 'No vera fou, but gaylie yet.' My two friends and I rode soberly down the Loch side, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gaily mounted, fell sadly astern; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, strained past the Highlandman, in spite of all his efforts with the hair-halter. Just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me, to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his breekless rider in a clipt hedge; and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny Geddes trode over me with such cautious reverence, that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future.

I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon. I was going to say a wife too; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of the house of Parnassus, and, like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue, if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry.

I am afraid I have almost ruined one source, the principal one, indeed, of my former happiness—that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. My heart no more glows with feverish rapture. I have no paradisiacal evening interviews, stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only * * * *. This last is one of your distant acquaintances; has a fine figure, and elegant manners, and, in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal; but what piques me, is her conduct at the commencement of

[1] Names of Scotch dancing-tunes.

our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in ——; and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp round the waist, I ventured, in my careless way, to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms; and after her return to ——, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words further, I suppose, than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve, like a mounting lark in an April-morning; and wrote me an answer which measured me out very completely what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climate of her favour. But I am an old hawk at the sport; and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aërial towerings pop down at my foot like Corporal Trim's hat.

As for the rest of my acts, and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes, they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence, at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by ROBERT BURNS.

It might be at the hospitable mansion here indicated, and by way of a ruing *amende* for the Inverary epigram, that Burns penned his well-known quatrain:—

COMPOSED ON LEAVING A PLACE IN THE HIGHLANDS WHERE HE HAD BEEN KINDLY ENTERTAINED.

When Death's dark stream I ferry o'er—
A time that surely shall come—
In Heaven itself I 'll ask no more,
Than just a Highland welcome!

Respecting the love affair alluded to, there is no further light, unless we are to consider a stray letter which has found its way into print without a superscription as connected with it. No safe conjecture can be formed as to the person meant, beyond that of her being an Ayrshire lady, which the phrase 'countrywoman' implies:—

TO MISS ——.

MY DEAR COUNTRYWOMAN—I am so impatient to shew you that I am once more at peace with you, that I send you the book I mentioned directly, rather than wait the uncertain time of my seeing you. I am afraid I have mislaid or lost Collins's Poems, which I promised to Miss Irvine. If I can find them, I will forward them by you; if not, you must apologise for me.

I know you will laugh at it when I tell you that your piano and you together have played the deuce somehow about my heart. My breast has been widowed these many months, and I thought myself

proof against the fascinating witchcraft; but I am afraid you will 'feelingly convince me what I am.' I say I am afraid, because I am not sure what is the matter with me. I have one miserable bad symptom: when you whisper or look kindly to another, it gives me a draught of damnation. I have a kind of wayward wish to be with you ten minutes by yourself, though what I would say, Heaven above knows, for I am sure I know not. I have no formed design in all this, but just, in the nakedness of my heart, write you down a mere matter-of-fact story. You may perhaps give yourself airs of distance on this, and that will completely cure me; but I wish you would not: just let us meet, if you please, in the old beaten way of friendship.

I will not subscribe myself your humble servant, for that is a phrase, I think, at least fifty miles off from the heart; but I will conclude with sincerely wishing that the Great Protector of innocence may shield you from the barbed dart of calumny, and hand you by the covert snare of deceit. R. B.

Dr Currie states that, returning from this tour to Mossgiel, he there spent the month of July, 'renewing his friendships, and extending his acquaintance throughout the country, where he was now very generally known and admired.'

TO MR JOHN RICHMOND.

MOSSGIEL, *7th July* 1787.

MY DEAR RICHMOND—I am all impatience to hear of your fate since the old confounder of right and wrong has turned you out of place, by his journey to answer his indictment at the bar of the other world.[1] He will find the practice of the court so different from the practice in which he has for so many years been thoroughly hackneyed, that his friends, if he had any connections truly of that kind, which I rather doubt, may well tremble for his sake. His chicane, his left-handed wisdom, which stood so firmly by him to such good purpose here, like other accomplices in robbery and plunder, will, now the piratical business is blown, in all probability turn king's evidence, and then the devil's bagpiper will touch him off '*Bundle and Go!*'

If he has left you any legacy, I beg your pardon for all this; if not, I know you will swear to every word I said about him.

I have lately been rambling over by Dumbarton and Inverary, and running a drunken race on the side of Loch Lomond with a wild Highlandman; his horse, which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather, zigzagged across before my old spavin'd hunter, whose name is Jenny Geddes, and down came the Highlandman, horse and all, and down came Jenny and my bardship; so I have

[1] Alluding to the recent decease of Richmond's master.

got such a skinful of bruises and wounds, that I shall be at least four weeks before I dare venture on my journey to Edinburgh.

Not one new thing under the sun has happened in Mauchline since you left it. I hope this will find you as comfortably situated as formerly, or, if Heaven pleases, more so; but at all events I trust you will let me know of course how matters stand with you, well or ill. 'Tis but poor consolation to tell the world when matters go wrong; but you know very well your connection and mine stands on a different footing. I am ever, my dear friend, yours, R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, 23d July 1787.

MY DEAR AINSLIE—There is one thing for which I set great store by you as a friend, and it is this—that I have not a friend upon earth, besides yourself, to whom I can talk nonsense without forfeiting some degree of his esteem. Now to one like me, who never cares for speaking anything else but nonsense, such a friend as you is an invaluable treasure. I was never a rogue, but have been a fool all my life; and, in spite of all my endeavours, I see now plainly that I shall never be wise. Now it rejoices my heart to have met with such a fellow as you, who, though you are not just such a hopeless fool as I, yet I trust you will never listen so much to the temptations of the devil, as to grow so very wise that you will in the least disrespect an honest fellow because he is a fool. In short, I have set you down as the staff of my old age, when the whole list of my friends will, after a decent share of pity, have forgot me.

'Though in the morn comes sturt and strife,
Yet joy may come at noon;
And I hope to live a merry merry life
When a' thir days are done.'

Write me soon, were it but a few lines just to tell me how that good sagacious man your father is—that kind dainty body your mother—that strapping chiel your brother Douglas—and my friend Rachel, who is as far before Rachel of old, as she was before her blear-eyed sister Leah. R. B.

Burns had in spring formed an acquaintance with the M'Leods of Raasay, doubtless through the medium of his Ayrshire friends, the Campbells of Loudoun, the young Countess of Loudoun's mother being a member of that Hebridean family. A lady of rank living in Perthshire (1854), remembers meeting Burns at an evening-party in the house of an aunt of M'Leod of Raasay in St John Street, where he seemed to be on easy terms. He had been on the previous night at a ball in Dunn's Rooms (now the

National Bank, St Andrew Square), and he spoke in high terms of the beauty of the ladies, as well as of the witchery of the music. His manner, however, was not prepossessing—scarcely, she thinks, manly or natural. It seemed as if he affected a rusticity or *landertness*, so that when he said the music was 'bonnie, bonnie,' it was like the expression of a child. This gives a curious idea of the nature of that ultra-deference of tone which Sir Walter Scott reports Burns as having used among ladies during his residence in Edinburgh.

On the 20th of July, died John M'Leod, youngest son of the Laird of Raasay, and on this melancholy subject the Muse of Burns became eloquent:—

ON READING IN A NEWSPAPER

THE DEATH OF JOHN M'LEOD, ESQ.,

BROTHER TO A YOUNG LADY, A PARTICULAR FRIEND OF THE AUTHOR'S.

Sad thy tale, thou idle page,
And rueful thy alarms—
Death tears the brother of her love
From Isabella's arms.

Sweetly decked with pearly dew
The morning rose may blow,
But cold successive noontide blasts
May lay its beauties low.

Fair on Isabella's morn
The sun propitious smiled,
But, long ere noon, succeeding clouds
Succeeding hopes beguiled.

Fate oft tears the bosom cords
That nature finest strung;
So Isabella's heart was formed,
And so that heart was wrung.

Were it in the poet's power,
Strong as he shares the grief
That pierces Isabella's heart,
To give that heart relief!

Dread Omnipotence, alone,
Can heal the wound he gave—
Can point the brimful grief-worn eyes
To scenes beyond the grave.

Virtue's blossoms there shall blow,
And fear no withering blast;
There Isabella's spotless worth
Shall happy be at last.

It was during this brief stay at Mossgiel that Burns penned his autobiographical letter to Dr Moore, of which the introduction and termination were as follows:—

MAUCHLINE, *2d August* 1787.

SIR—For some months past I have been rambling over the country, but I am now confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country—you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be often at my own expense; for I assure you, sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of *wisdom*, I sometimes think I resemble—I have, I say, like him, *turned my eyes to behold madness and folly*, and, like him, too frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. * * * After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some twitching qualms of conscience, arising from suspicion that he was doing what he ought not to do—a predicament he has more than once been in before.

* * * * *

My most respectful compliments to Miss W.[1] Her very elegant and friendly letter I cannot answer at present, as my presence is requisite in Edinburgh, and I set out to-morrow.

It was necessary that Burns should return to Edinburgh. He had to settle with his bookseller, Creech; and for some other excursions which he contemplated through the classic scenes of his native country, Edinburgh was the proper starting-point. He arrived in the city on the 7th of August.[2]

The only literary incident that can be attached to the little interval between Burns's arrival in Edinburgh and his departure on his Highland tour, is the composition of an elegy on the death of Sir James Hunter Blair. Sir James was an Ayrshire squire,

[1] Miss Helen Maria Williams.

[2] This date is assumed on the strength of a passage in a letter to Dr Moore, Jan. 4, 1789: 'He [Creech] kept me hanging on about Edinburgh from the 7th of August until the 18th of April 1788.'

and a member of the banking-house of Sir William Forbes and Company; a public-spirited citizen and magistrate of Edinburgh, and an amiable man. He had been one of Burns's kindest patrons, when the poet first came to town, feeling, doubtless, a particular interest in his fortunes on account of his Ayrshire nativity.[1] He was cut off on the 1st of July, in the prime of life, and it was with no venal feeling that Burns penned verses on the occasion. It cannot be said that they form a happy example of his powers; but they are interesting from their local allusions, and comprise one or two lines not unworthy to have proceeded from the bowers of Twickenham:—

ON THE DEATH OF SIR JAMES HUNTER BLAIR.

The lamp of day, with ill-presaging glare,
  Dim, cloudy, sank beneath the western wave;
The inconstant blast howled through the darkening air,
  And hollow whistled in the rocky cave.

Lone as I wandered by each cliff and dell,
  Once the loved haunts of Scotia's royal train;[2]
Or mused where limpid streams once hallowed well,[3]
  Or mouldering ruins mark the sacred fane.[4]

The increasing blast roared round the beetling rocks,
  The clouds, swift-winged, flew o'er the starry sky,
The groaning trees untimely shed their locks,
  And shooting-meteors caught the startled eye.

The paly moon rose in the livid east,
  And 'mong the cliffs disclosed a stately form,
In weeds of wo that frantic beat her breast,
  And mixed her wailings with the raving storm.

Wild to my heart the filial pulses glow,
  'Twas Caledonia's trophied shield I viewed:
Her form majestic drooped in pensive wo,
  The lightning of her eye in tears imbued.

Reversed that spear, redoubtable in war,
  Reclined that banner, erst in fields unfurled,
That like a deathful meteor gleamed afar,
  And braved the mighty monarchs of the world.

[1] The present Sir David Hunter Blair, son of Sir James, remembers sitting at his father's breakfast-table with Burns, in the family residence in the eastern division of Queen Street. —1854.

[2] The King's Park, at Holyrood House.

[3] St Anthony's Well.

[4] St Anthony's Chapel.

'My patriot son fills an untimely grave!'
With accents wild and lifted arms—she cried:
'Low lies the hand that oft was stretched to save,
Low lies the heart that swelled with honest pride.

'A weeping country joins a widow's tear;
The helpless poor mix with the orphan's cry;
The drooping arts surround their patron's bier;
And grateful science heaves the heartfelt sigh!

'I saw my sons resume their ancient fire;
I saw fair Freedom's blossoms richly blow:
But ah! how hope is born but to expire!
Relentless fate has laid their guardian low.

'My patriot falls, but shall he lie unsung,
While empty greatness saves a worthless name?
No: every Muse shall join her tuneful tongue,
And future ages hear his growing fame.

'And I will join a mother's tender cares,
Through future times to make his virtue last;
That distant years may boast of other Blairs!'—
She said, and vanished with the sweeping blast.

One can imagine that, with all his interest in the death of the Ayrshire patriot, Burns did not find his Muse very active of invention on this occasion. Such actually appears to have been the case. Amongst the poet's Edinburgh patrons was Mr John Ferrier, writer to the Signet, father of a lady who in a later age has distinguished herself in the walk of prose fiction.[1] This gentleman had, in 1784, built for himself a house in George Street, a few doors west of St Andrew's Church. It was the most westerly house in that part of the New Town in its day, and considered as so remote from the great centre of business, that Mr Ferrier's brother agents were generally impressed with the idea, that his removing so far out of the way would be seriously injurious to his prospects in the profession.[2] These local particulars lead us to the idea of Burns rambling one day along the rudimentary streets of the New Town, and finding the inspiration of which he was in search for the Blair elegy in a rencontre with Mr Ferrier's eldest daughter.[3]

[1] Authoress of *Marriage*, *The Inheritance*, and *Destiny*.

[2] The house is now occupied by Messrs Paterson and Roy, musicsellers.

[3] Afterwards Mrs General Graham; now for some years deceased.

TO MISS FERRIER,

ENCLOSING THE ELEGY ON SIR J. H. BLAIR.

Nae heathen name shall I prefix
  Frae Pindus or Parnassus;
Auld Reekie dings them a' to sticks, beats
  For rhyme-inspiring lasses.

Jove's tunefu' dochters three times three
  Made Homer deep their debtor;
But, gien the body half an e'e,
  Nine Ferriers wad done better!

Last day my mind was in a bog,
  Down George's Street I stoited; tottered
A creeping cauld prosaic fog
  My very senses doited. stupified

Do what I dought to set her free, could
  My saul lay in the mire;
Ye turned a neuk—I saw your e'e—
  She took the wing like fire!

The mournfu' sang I here enclose,
  In gratitude I send you;
And [wish and] pray in rhyme sincere,
  A' gude things may attend you![1]

The reader cannot fail to have been struck by the poet's self-accusations in some of his recently written letters—as where he tells Ainslie that he now sees he never shall be wise, and admits to Nicol that 'thoughtless follies and hair-brained whims' are continually leading him aside from 'the right line of sober discretion.' When taken ill at Mr Hood's, 'imbittering remorse scares his fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death.' For *follies* read *sins*, and we have the unfortunate bard's case truly before us. A perverse passion, which was the half of his wonderful inspiration—how sad to have to acknowledge that it had still been betraying him into derogatory conduct during this year of brilliant reputation. To him the past had no effectual warning; the future was ever undreamt of till too late. Even that consideration of wrong and suffering to others, which one would have expected to be the strongest guard to a genially humane and unselfish mind like his, failed to keep him in the right path. Yet let not the reader indulge in any exaggerated suppositions; let him rather know

[1] The original manuscript of this piece is in the possession of Miss Grace Aiken, Ayr.

the simple fact, that one young woman was now—to use a phrase of his own—under a cloud on his account in Edinburgh. In considering the situation of the great poet, enjoying the first fame, and bethinking him of the new career before him, we cannot have a full sense of what he was and felt himself to be, unless we keep in view that he must have had his private reflections on great, though secret transgressions; his remorse for their effects on others; and his terrors for their retributory evils to himself. During this very month, while preparing for a tour amongst the nobles of the land, he was assailed with a repetition of the legal proceedings which had sent him into hiding a twelvemonth before, though regarding a different person—a fact substantiated beyond doubt by a document dated the 15th of August, liberating him from the restraints of a writ of *in meditatione fugæ*.[1] This document he had himself preserved, and probably carried about with him for some time, so that it had been liable to be used as a piece of spare paper for memoranda of his own. Most characteristically, it contains, scribbled with a pencil in his own hand, a couple of verses of an old indecorously comical song, which he must have heard somewhere, and wished to preserve. Such was Burns: with genius transcendent, and feelings alive to all the impulses of the noblest humanity, fatally, recklessly, liable to a passion remarkable for the humiliations to which it exposes its victims. Was it an incongruous character? Where is the man that could maintain such a theory? Then, is Burns beyond forgiveness, admiration, and love? Let him who has shewn the same measure of greatness answer the question in the affirmative. 'Twere superfluous to say what the verdict of his countrymen in general will be.

On returning to Edinburgh, Burns did not resume his former lodging. His friend Richmond having, in the interval, taken in another fellow-lodger, he was obliged to go elsewhere. He is supposed to have accepted a temporary accommodation in the house of his friend Nicol, who was to be his companion in the contemplated Highland tour. Dr Currie's sketch of this person is substantially just:—'Mr Nicol was of Dumfriesshire, of a descent equally humble with our poet. Like him, he rose by the strength of his talents, and fell by the strength of his passions. He died in the summer of 1797[2] [at the age of fifty-three]. Having received the elements of a classical instruction

[1] The terms of this writ must have been merely used formally, in order to force him to a granting of the required security.

[2] April 1797.

at his parish school, Mr Nicol made a very rapid and singular proficiency; and by early undertaking the office of an instructor himself, he acquired the means of entering the university of Edinburgh. There he was first a student of theology, then a student of medicine, and was afterwards employed in the assistance and instruction of graduates in medicine, in those parts of their exercises in which the Latin language is employed. In this situation he was the contemporary and rival of the celebrated Dr Brown,[1] whom he resembled in the particulars of his history, as well as in the leading features of his character. The [place of an under-teacher] in the High School being vacant, it was, as usual, filled up by competition; and in the face of some prejudices, and perhaps of some well-founded objections, Mr Nicol, by superior learning, carried it from all the other candidates. This office he filled at the period of which we speak.

'It is to be lamented that an acquaintance with the writers of Greece and Rome does not always supply an original want of taste and correctness in manners and conduct; and where it fails of this effect, it sometimes inflames the native pride of temper, which treats with disdain those delicacies in which it has not learnt to excel. It was thus with the fellow-traveller of Burns. Formed by nature in a model of great strength, neither his person nor his manners had any tincture of taste or elegance; and his coarseness was not compensated by that romantic sensibility, and those towering flights of imagination, which distinguished the conversation of Burns, in the blaze of whose genius all the deficiencies of his manners were absorbed and disappeared.'

To this sketch of Nicol something must be added, in order to explain why Burns gave him his friendship. With all his faults, he was a warm-hearted man. 'He cherished with enthusiasm the recollection of his early years, and rejoiced to meet the companions of his youth. He would go any length to serve and promote the views and wishes of a friend.'[2] Such is the report of one who knew him intimately. A not less characteristic addition of the same writer is—'Whenever low jealousy, trick, or selfish cunning

[1] Author of the Brownonian system of medicine; an extraordinary genius, now beginning to be forgotten. His therapeutics were a kind of epicurism, too well adapted to acquire the favour of fashion in that age; and he was scrupulous to practise himself what he dictated to others, being never without a whisky-bottle on his lecture-table, from which he occasionally helped himself in the presence of his pupils. In the present sober times, it seems scarcely possible that such an eccentricity could have been even attempted.

[2] Dr Steven's *History of the High School of Edinburgh*, 1849; second series of pages, p. 95.

appeared, his mind kindled to something like fury or madness.' One can see that this was, on the whole, a character to attract the sympathies of Burns. The poet probably knew little of the cruelties exercised by Nicol in his class, which by all accounts were terrific. Neither could he probably have entered with impartiality into the merits of a quarrel between Nicol and the Rector Adam, which had come to a strong point in the preceding month. Dr Adam—an amiable man, as well as excellent scholar and teacher—having offended Mr Nicol in the course of his duty as superintendent of the younger classes of the school, the latter had made a personal assault upon him in the courtyard before the boys: nor could any of Adam's mild remonstrances draw forth an apology for the act.[1] Burns, however, fully knew and understood the rash, irascible character of Nicol, and very happily compared himself with such a *compagnon de voyage* to a man travelling with a loaded blunderbuss at full cock!

A letter of Burns, dated a week after his arrival in town, and apparently addressed to Mr Archibald Lawrie, the son of his Loudon host, was probably written in Mr Nicol's house. When we remember that at this very time he was involved in legal troubles of a most disagreeable kind—troubles which were not to be brought under the sympathising notice of every friend—we may well wonder at the levity of style in which he pronounces himself to a young clergyman:—

TO [MR ARCHIBALD LAWRIE.]

EDINBURGH, 14*th August* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—Here am I—that is all I can tell you of that unaccountable being—myself. What I am doing, no mortal can tell; what I am thinking, I myself cannot tell; what I am usually saying, is not worth telling. The clock is just striking, one, two, three, four, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, twelve, forenoon; and here I sit, in the attic story, *alias* the garret, with a friend on the right hand of my standish—a friend whose kindness I shall largely experience at the close of this line—there—thank you—a friend, my dear Mr Lawrie, whose kindness often makes me blush; a friend who has more of the milk of human kindness than all the human race put together, and what is highly to his honour, peculiarly a friend to the friendless as often as they come in his way; in short, sir, he is, without the least alloy, a universal philanthropist; and his much-beloved name is—a bottle of good old

[1] Two letters addressed by Dr Adam to Nicol on this outrage, in the gentlest terms of expostulation, are before us through the favour of Dr Steven, author of the work above cited.

Port! In a week, if whim and weather serve, I shall set out for the north—a tour to the Highlands.

I ate some Newhaven broth, in other words, boiled mussels, with Mr Farquhar's family, t'other day. Now I see you prick up your ears. They are all well, and Mademoiselle is particularly well. She begs her respects to you all; along with which please present those of your humble servant. I can no more. I have so high a veneration, or rather idolatrisation, for the cleric character, that even a little *futurum esse vel fuisse Priestling* in his *Penna pennæ pennæ*, &c., throws an awe over my mind in his presence, and shortens my sentences into single ideas.

Farewell, and believe me to be ever, my dear sir, yours,

ROBERT BURNS.[1]

A jocular letter of the 23d August, represents the poet as sitting in the same room with Nicol and some of his pupils.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, JUNIOR,
BERRYWELL, DUNSE.

EDINBURGH, 23*d August* 1787.

'As I gaed up to Dunse,
To warp a pickle yarn,' &c.

From henceforth, my dear sir, I am determined to set off with my letters like the periodical writers; namely, prefix a kind of text, quoted from some classic of undoubted authority, such as the author of the immortal piece of which my text is a part. What I have to say on my text is exhausted in the chatter I wrote you the other day, before I had the pleasure of receiving yours from Inverleithen; and sure never was anything more lucky, as I have but the time to write this that Mr Nicol, on the opposite side of the table, takes to correct a proof-sheet of a thesis. They are gabbling Latin so loud, that I cannot hear what my own soul is saying in my own skull, so must just give you a matter-of-fact sentence or two. * * * *

To-morrow, I leave Edinburgh in a chaise: Nicol thinks it more comfortable than horseback, to which I say, Amen; so Jenny Geddes goes home to Ayrshire, to use a phrase of my mother's, 'wi' her finger in her mouth.'

Now for a modest verse of classical authority—

'The cats like kitchen,[2]
The dogs like broe;
The lasses like the lads weel,
And th' auld wives too.

And we 're a' noddin',
Nid, nid, noddin',
We 're a' noddin' fou at e'en.'

[1] First published in the *Glasgow Citizen* (newspaper), April 8, 1854.

[2] Any kind of better food taken as a relish, is called *kitchen* in Scotland.

If this does not please you, let me hear from you; if you write any time before the first of September, direct to Inverness, to be left at the post-office till called for; the next week, at Aberdeen; the next, at Edinburgh. The sheet is done, and I shall just conclude with assuring you that I am, and ever with pride shall be, my dear sir, yours, &c. R. B.

Of his Highland excursion, Burns has left a diary similar to that which he kept during his southern tour. We propose to make him by this means tell the main features of his story, but to insert at intervals such additional details as have been obtained, and such explanations as may be necessary:—

'[*Saturday*] 25*th August* 1787.—I leave Edinburgh for a northern tour, in company with my good friend Mr Nicol, whose originality of humour promises me much entertainment. Linlithgow —a fertile improved country—West Lothian. The more elegance and luxury among the farmers, I always observe, in equal proportion, the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c. For this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste, a "Man of Feeling," will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds of the peasantry in Ayrshire (peasantry they are all below the Justice of Peace), than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when at the same time he considers the Vandalism of their plough-folks, &c. I carry this idea so far, that an unenclosed, half-improven country is to me actually more agreeable, and gives me more pleasure as a prospect, than a country cultivated like a garden.[1] Soil about Linlithgow light and thin. The town carries the appearance of rude, decayed grandeur—charmingly rural, retired situation. The old royal palace a tolerably fine, but melancholy ruin, sweetly situated on a small elevation by the brink of a loch. Shewn the room where the beautiful injured Mary Queen of Scots was born—a pretty good old Gothic church. The infamous stool of repentance standing, in the old Romish way, on a lofty situation.

'What a poor, pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship! dirty, narrow, and squalid; stuck in a corner of old popish grandeur such as Linlithgow, and much more Melrose! Ceremony and show, if judiciously thrown in, absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in religious and civil matters. Dine. Go

[1] These remarks are not unworthy of the attention of modern political economists.

to my friend Smith's at Avon print-field:[1] find nobody but Mrs Miller, an agreeable, sensible, modest, good body, as useful, but not so ornamental, as Fielding's Miss Western—not rigidly polite *à la Française*, but easy, hospitable, and housewifely.

'An old lady from Paisley, a Mrs Lawson, whom I promise to call for in Paisley—like old Lady W[auchope], and still more like Mrs C——, her conversation is pregnant with strong sense and just remark, but, like them, a certain air of self-importance and a *duresse* in the eye seem to indicate, as the Ayrshire wife observed of her cow, that "she had a mind o' her ain."

'Pleasant view of Dunfermline, and the rest of the fertile coast of Fife, as we go down to that dirty, ugly place, Borrowstounness: see a horse-race, and call on a friend of Mr Nicol's, a Bailie Cowan, of whom I know too little to attempt his portrait. Come through the rich Carse of Falkirk to pass the night. Falkirk nothing remarkable, except the tomb of Sir John the Graham, over which, in the succession of time, four [three] stones have been placed.'

[The travellers appear to have spent the night in the Cross Keys Inn at Falkirk. Burns had lately provided himself with a diamond, wherewith to scribble on glass; and it is said that a verse written with this instrument was afterwards found on a window in the inn:—

Sound be his sleep and blithe his morn,
  That never did a lassie wrang;
Who poverty ne'er held in scorn,
  For misery ever tholed a pang.[2]]

'[*Sunday, August* 26.]—Camelon, the ancient metropolis of the Picts, now a small village in the neighbourhood of Falkirk. Cross the Grand Canal to Carron.'

[It would appear that the travellers zigzagged a little on their route between Falkirk and Stirling. They went to Carron, in the hope of seeing the celebrated ironworks there, although, the day being Sunday, it is difficult to understand how they

[1] Smith had lately removed from Mauchline to this place.

[2] This is given on the authority of Mr G. Boyack, St Andrews. It is introduced, with some other circumstances regarding Burns's visit to Falkirk, which I regard as doubtful, in the *Fifeshire Journal*, Nov. 4, 1847. The last line is there given thus: 'For misery *never* tholed a pang,' which, being inconsistent with the sense evidently intended, I have here taken leave to alter.

should have expected admission. The following epigram comes in here:—

WRITTEN ON A WINDOW OF THE INN AT CARRON.

We cam na here to view your warks
  In hopes to be mair wise,
But only, lest we gang to hell,
  It may be nae surprise:

But whan we tirled at your door,
  Your porter dought na hear us;
Sae may, should we to hell's yetts come,
  Your billy Satan sair us!

Mr Lockhart relates an anecdote, which may be applicable to the preceding evening, excepting only that Jenny Geddes is a figure *de trop*:—'I have heard that, riding one dark night near Carron, his companion teased him with noisy exclamations of delight and wonder whenever an opening in the wood permitted them to see the magnificent glare of the furnaces: "Look, Burns! Good Heaven! Look, look! What a glorious sight!" "Sir," said Burns, "I would not *look look* at your bidding, if it were the mouth of hell!"']

'Pass Dunipace, a place laid out with fine taste; a charming amphitheatre bounded by Denny village, and pleasant seats down the way to Dunipace. The Carron running down the bosom of the whole, makes it one of the most charming little prospects I have seen.

'Dine at Auchinbowie: Mr Monro an excellent worthy old man, Miss Monro an amiable, sensible, sweet young woman, much resembling Mrs Grierson. Come to Bannockburn. Shewn the old house where James III. finished so tragically his unfortunate life. The field of Bannockburn: the hole where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself that I see my gallant, heroic countrymen coming o'er the hill, and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers; noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, blood-thirsty foe! I see them meet in gloriously triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence! Come to Stirling.'

[TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

STIRLING, 26th *August* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—I intended to have written you from Edinburgh, and now write you from Stirling to make an excuse. Here am I, on my way to Inverness, with a truly original, but very worthy man, a Mr Nicol, one of the masters of the High School in Edinburgh. I left Auld Reekie yesterday morning, and have passed, besides by-excursions, Linlithgow, Borrowstounness, Falkirk, and here am I undoubtedly. This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old Caledonia over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen by the setting sun the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich carse of Falkirk. The crops are very strong, but so very late, that there is no harvest except a ridge or two perhaps in ten miles, all the way I have travelled from Edinburgh.

I left Andrew Bruce[1] and family all well. I will be at least three weeks in making my tour, as I shall return by the coast, and have many people to call for.

My best compliments to Charles, our dear kinsman and fellow-saint, and Messrs W. and H. Parkers. I hope Hughoc[2] is going on and prospering with God and Miss M'Causlin.

If I could think on anything sprightly, I should let you hear every other post; but a dull, matter-of-fact business, like this scrawl, the less and seldomer one writes the better.

Among other matters-of-fact, I shall add this—that I am, and ever shall be, my dear sir, your obliged, R. B.

At Stirling, Burns left his companion for a day, in order to pay a visit at Harvieston, in the valley of the Devon. It might have been mentioned before, if there had been any proper occasion for it, that amongst the persons whose acquaintance the poet had formed at Dr Blacklock's, was a young lady named Margaret Chalmers, a connection of his friend Gavin Hamilton. Miss Chalmers, without being a beauty, had a pleasant, intelligent face; without any pretensions to literary talent or studious habits, she

[1] Andrew Bruce, a shopkeeper on the North Bridge, Edinburgh, to whom Burns, on his arrival in the city, requested his letters to be addressed, appears to have become known to him through a Kilmarnock line of acquaintance.

[2] Mr Hugh Parker.

was a woman eminently capable of appreciating the society of literary men. Blacklock adored her for her delightful voice, being, in his blind state, more alive to that 'excellent thing in woman' than to any other female charm of a physical nature. To Burns she was a deeply interesting person, being one of a small knot of elegant and accomplished women whom he acknowledges to have been pleasing novelties to him on his arrival in Edinburgh, while men of whatever rank appeared to him not greatly different from the better sort of country men he was already accustomed to meet. As yet, however, Burns had not advanced far in acquaintance with Miss Chalmers.

Mrs Hamilton, the stepmother of Gavin—Mrs Chalmers, the mother of this young lady—and the deceased Mrs Tait of Harvieston, were sisters—the children of Murdoch of Cumlodden, in Galloway, the representative of a gallant peasant who had got lands for the help he gave to Bruce on a perilous occasion.[1]

On selling his property, the late Mr Chalmers of Fingland had retired to a beautifully situated farm on the Ayr, in the neighbourhood of Mauchline. There the families of Mrs Chalmers and Mrs Hamilton had grown up in the greatest intimacy and friendship. At length, however, Mrs Chalmers, becoming a widow, removed to Edinburgh. About the same time Mr Tait, being left a widower with a son and daughter, invited his sister-in-law, Mrs Hamilton, to take up her residence at Harvieston, that she might preside over his household until his daughter grew up. Mrs Hamilton, accordingly, lived there with her children, one of whom, named Charlotte, was bursting into womanhood, with the promise of uncommon beauty. Mrs Chalmers also occasionally lived there in summer with her daughters—namely, the aforesaid Margaret, and one about twenty years older, the wife of Sir Hector Mackenzie. On the present occasion, Mrs Chalmers and Lady Mackenzie were present; but Miss Chalmers had been left in

[1] Through their mother, the three ladies were grand-nieces of Grizel Cochrane of Ochiltree, the heroine of a remarkable anecdote of the difficult times of James II. Her father, the Hon. John Cochrane, being condemned to die in Edinburgh for his share in Argyle's rebellion, the young lady disguised herself, attacked the post-messenger as he crossed the Border, and robbed him of the warrant for the execution. Thus she is said to have saved her father's life several times. Grizel Cochrane, who became Mrs Kerr of Morriston, in Berwickshire, is represented in her picture as a gentle girl of seventeen, with handsome features of sweet expression, leaning on a table, on which are pistols, and the disguise she wore.—*Letter from a relation of Mrs Chalmers.*

Edinburgh. It will now be tolerably plain how Burns made his approach to the beautiful valley of the Devon.

His entry on the subject in his journal is brief, consisting only of these words: '*Monday.*—Go to Harvieston. Go to see Caudron Linn, and Rumbling Brig, and Deil's Mill. Return in the evening.' But he has left us a more satisfactory account of the day in a letter

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

STIRLING, 28*th August* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—Here am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly-waving crops of wheat, barley, &c., but no harvest at all yet, except in one or two places an old wife's ridge. Yesterday morning, I rode from this town up the meandering Devon's banks, to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast we made a party to go and see the famous Caudron Linn, a remarkable cascade in the Devon, about five miles above Harvieston; and after spending one of the most pleasant days I ever had in my life, I returned to Stirling in the evening. They are a family, sir, though I had not had any prior tie—though they had not been the brothers and sisters of a certain generous friend of mine—I would never forget them. I am told you have not seen them these several years, so you can have very little idea of what these young folks are now. Your brother is as tall as you are, but slender rather than otherwise; and I have the satisfaction to inform you that he is getting the better of those consumptive symptoms which I suppose you know were threatening him. His make, and particularly his manner, resemble you, but he will have a still finer face. (I put in the word *still*, to please Mrs Hamilton.) Good sense, modesty, and at the same time a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact, are striking features in his character; and, what with me is the Alpha and Omega, he has a heart that might adorn the breast of a poet! Grace has a good figure, and the look of health and cheerfulness, but nothing else remarkable in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking a likeness as is between her and your little Beenie; the mouth and chin particularly. She is reserved at first; but as we grew better acquainted, I was delighted with the native frankness of her manner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Of Charlotte, I cannot speak in common terms of admiration: she is not only beautiful, but lovely. Her form is elegant; her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness and the settled complacency of good-nature in the highest degree; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise

of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr Donne's mistress:

> ———'Her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
> That one would almost say her body thought.'

Her eyes are fascinating; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness, and a noble mind.

I do not give you all this account, my good sir, to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. Such relations the first peer in the realm might own with pride; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks? I had a thousand questions to answer about you. I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them that John[1] was so good a boy, and so fine a scholar, and that Willie was going on still very pretty: but I have it in commission to tell her from them, that beauty is a poor silly bauble without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh, but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs Chalmers; only Lady Mackenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat, somewhat marred our enjoyment.

I shall not be in Ayrshire for four weeks. My most respectful compliments to Mrs Hamilton, Miss Kennedy,[2] and Dr Mackenzie. I shall probably write him from some stage or other. I am ever, sir, yours most gratefully, R. B.

In the evening, the travellers supped in a company, which the poet sketches off in brief terms:—'Supper—Messrs Doig, the schoolmaster; Bell; and Captain Forrester of the castle. Doig, a queerish figure, and something of a pedant; Bell, a joyous fellow, who sings a good song; Forrester, a merry, swearing kind of man, with a dash of the sodger.' This Mr Doig was a man of some note as a scholar and author. He is chiefly remembered for a controversy with Lord Kames on the question of the origin of civilisation.

On Saturday night, the travellers had not been more charmed with the magnificent panorama of the Grampians presented on the battlements of the castle, than their national and Jacobitical feelings had been outraged by the ruinous state of the ancient hall in which parliaments had occasionally been held under the Scottish kings.

[1] 'May health and peace, with mutual rays,
Shine on the evening of his days,
Till his *wee curlie John's* ieroe,
When ebbing life nae mair shall flow,
The last sad mournful rites bestow!'
—*Dedication to G. H.*

John Hamilton, Esq., the eldest son of his father, is now a wine-merchant in London.

[2] The sister of Mrs Gavin Hamilton.

An inscription was afterwards found on the window of their room:—

Here Stuarts once in triumph reigned,
And laws for Scotland's weal ordained;
But now unroofed their palace stands,
Their sceptre 's fallen to other hands.
The injured Stuarts' line are gone,
A race outlandish fill their throne—
An idiot race, to honour lost:
Who know them best, despise them most.[1]

Allan Cunningham has given some particulars regarding this affair, which I repeat, without vouching for their accuracy. 'The poet seems not to have been very sensible at that time of his imprudence: for some one said: "Burns, this will do you no good." "I shall reprove myself," he said, and wrote these aggravating words—

"Rash mortal, and slanderous poet, thy name
Shall no longer appear in the records of Fame;
Dost not know that old Mansfield, who writes like the Bible,
Says the more 'tis a truth, sir, the more 'tis a libel?"'

The lines were speedily copied into note-books, became generally known, and of course excited no small amount of remark. It is stated that the Rev. Mr Hamilton of Gladsmuir, soon after coming to Stirling, and seeing the verses, added the following:—

'Thus wretches rail whom sordid gain
Drags in Faction's gilded chain;
But can a mind which Fame inspires,
Where genius lights her brightest fires—
Can BURNS, disdaining truth and law,
Faction's venomed dagger draw;
And, skulking with a villain's aim,
Basely stab his monarch's fame?

[1] In the *Paisley Magazine*, Dec. 1828, there is a narration meant to shew that Nicol, and not Burns, was the author of these lines. It is stated that Burns, finding them attributed to himself, although sensible that they injured him with society, allowed the imputation to rest, rather than expose Nicol to the same evil fame, which to him would have been more injurious. Although this story is brought forward in a circumstantial and confident manner, it has little evidence in its favour, and a good deal against it. Mr B. Nightingale, Priory Road, London, possesses a few leaves of a manuscript book in Burns's handwriting. Amongst several pieces published and unpublished, appears this unfortunate epigram, with the head-line, *Wrote by Somebody in an Inn at Stirling.*

'These miserable lines were printed, with three answers to them severely rebuking the author, in a pamphlet, entitled *Animadversions on some Poets and Poetasters of the Present Age, especially R——t B——s and J——n L——k* [Burns and Lapraik], *with a Contrast with some of a Former Age.* By James Maxwell, Poet, Paisley, in 1788. This tract, which consisted of wretched verses attempting to depreciate Burns's abilities, and to injure his character, has long been forgotten.'—PICKERING.

Yes, Burns, 'tis o'er, thy race is run,
And shades receive thy setting sun:
With pain thy wayward fate I see,
And mourn the lot that's doomed for thee:
These few rash lines will damn thy name,
And blast thy hopes of future fame.'[1]]

'*Tuesday Morning.*—Breakfast with Captain Forrester—Ochil Hills—Devon River—Forth and Teith—Allan River—Strathallan, a fine country, but little improved—Cross Earn to Crieff—Dine and go to Aberuchil—cold reception at Aberuchil—a most romantically pleasant ride up Earn, by Auchtertyre and Comrie, to Aberuchil—Sup at Crieff.

'*Wednesday Morning.*—Leave Crieff—Glen Almond—Almond River—Ossian's grave—Loch Fruoch—Glenquaich—Landlord and landlady remarkable characters—Taymouth—described in rhyme—Meet the Hon. Charles Townshend.'

[VERSES

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL OVER THE CHIMNEY-PIECE, IN THE PARLOUR OF THE INN AT KENMORE, TAYMOUTH.

Admiring Nature in her wildest grace,
These northern scenes with weary feet I trace;
O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
The abodes of covied grouse and timid sheep,
My savage journey, curious, I pursue,
Till famed Breadalbane opens to my view.
The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,
The woods, wild scattered, clothe their ample sides;
The outstretching lake, imbosomed 'mong the hills,
The eye with wonder and amazement fills;
The Tay, meandering sweet in infant pride,
The palace, rising on its verdant side;
The lawns, wood-fringed in Nature's native taste;
The hillocks, dropt in Nature's careless haste;
The arches, striding o'er the new-born stream;
The village, glittering in the noontide beam—

* * * *

Poetic ardours in my bosom swell,
Lone wandering by the hermit's mossy cell:
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods;
Th' incessant roar of headlong tumbling floods—

* * * *

[1] Mr Cunningham states the fact as to Hamilton; but his stupid rejoinder is here given from a manuscript source.

Here Poesy might wake her Heaven-taught lyre,
And look through nature with creative fire;
Here to the wrongs of Fate half reconciled,
Misfortunes lightened steps might wander wild;
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter, rankling wounds:
Here heart-struck Grief might heavenward stretch her scan,
And injured Worth forget and pardon man.]

* * * *

'*Thursday.*—Come down Tay to Dunkeld—Glenlyon House—Lyon River—Druid's Temple—three circles of stones—the outermost sunk—the second has thirteen stones remaining—the innermost has eight—two large detached ones like a gate, to the south-east—say prayers in it—pass Tay Bridge—Aberfeldy—described in rhyme—Castle-Menzies—Inver—Dr Stewart—Sup.'

[The beautiful falls of Moness, at Aberfeldy, excited the poet to verse; but on this occasion it came in a lyric form, for he remembered a simple old ditty, called the *Birks of Abergeldy*, referring to a place in Aberdeenshire, and struck by the nearly identical name of this spot, his thoughts fell into harmony with the tune possessing his mind:—

THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDY.

TUNE—*The Birks of Abergeldy.*

CHORUS.

Bonny lassie, will ye go,
Will ye go, will ye go;
Bonny lassie, will ye go,
To the birks of Aberfeldy?

Now simmer blinks on flowery braes, glances
And o'er the crystal streamlet plays;
Come, let us spend the lightsome days
In the birks of Aberfeldy.

The little birdies blithely sing,
While o'er their heads the hazels hing,
Or lightly flit on wanton wing
In the birks of Aberfeldy.

The braes ascend, like lofty wa's,
The foamy stream deep-roaring fa's,
O'erhung wi' fragrant spreading shaws, woods
The birks of Aberfeldy.

The hoary cliffs are crowned wi' flowers,
White o'er the linns the burnie pours, cascades
And rising, weets wi' misty showers
The birks of Aberfeldy.

Let Fortune's gifts at random flee,
They ne'er shall draw a wish frae me,
Supremely blest wi' love and thee,
In the birks of Aberfeldy.]

'*Friday.*—Walk with Mrs Stewart and Beard to Birnam top—fine prospect down Tay—Craigiebarns Hills—hermitage on the Bran Water, with a picture of Ossian—breakfast with Dr Stewart—Neil Gow plays—a short, stout-built, honest Highland figure, with his grayish hair shed on his honest social brow—an interesting face, marking strong sense, kind open-heartedness, mixed with unmistrusting simplicity—visit his house—Marget Gow.

'Ride up Tummel River to Blair [the seat of the Duke of Athole]—Fascally, a beautiful romantic nest—wild grandeur of the Pass of Killiecrankie—visit the gallant Lord Dundee's stone.

'Blair—Sup with the Duchess—easy and happy from the manners of the family—confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker.

'*Saturday* [*Sept.* 1].—Visit the scenes round Blair—fine, but spoiled with bad taste—Tilt and Garry rivers—Falls on the Tilt—heather seat—ride in company with Sir William Murray and Mr Walker to Loch Tummel—meanderings of the Rannoch, which runs through quondam Struan Robertson's estate from Loch Rannoch to Loch Tummel—dine at Blair. Company—General Murray; Captain Murray, an honest tar; Sir William Murray, an honest, worthy man, but tormented with the hypochondria; Mrs Graham, *belle et aimable;* Miss Cathcart; Mrs Murray, a painter; Mrs King; Duchess and fine family, the Marquis, Lords James, Edward, and Robert; Ladies Charlotte, Emilia, and children dance; sup; Mr Graham of Fintry.'

[Burns had, at Edinburgh, formed the acquaintance of Mr Josiah (afterwards Professor) Walker, a young man of his own county, and hence peculiarly apt to gain upon his affections. They had often met at Dr Blacklock's, Professor Stewart's, and other houses. On now coming with a letter of introduction to Blair, it was a fortunate circumstance for the poet and Nicol to find Mr Walker residing there in the capacity of preceptor. Of the visit, which Burns exceedingly enjoyed, Dr Currie received an account from Mr Walker:—

'On reaching Blair, he sent me notice of his arrival (as I had

been previously acquainted with him), and I hastened to meet him at the inn. The Duke, to whom he brought a letter of introduction, was from home; but the Duchess, being informed of his arrival, gave him an invitation to sup and sleep at Athole House [Blair]. He accepted the invitation; but as the hour of supper was at some distance, begged I would, in the interval, be his guide through the grounds. It was already growing dark; yet the softened though faint and uncertain view of their beauties, which the moonlight afforded us, seemed exactly suited to the state of his feelings at the time. I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. I cannot help thinking it might have been here that he conceived the idea of the following lines, which he afterwards introduced into his poem on Bruar Water, when only fancying such a combination of objects as were now present to his eye:—

> "Or by the reaper's nightly beam,
> Mild-chequering through the trees,
> Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,
> Hoarse swelling on the breeze."

It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time to supper.

'My curiosity was great to see how he would conduct himself in company so different from what he had been accustomed to. His manner was unembarrassed, plain, and firm. He appeared to have complete reliance on his own native good sense for directing his behaviour. He seemed at once to perceive and to appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but when led into it, he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The Duke's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as *honest men and bonny lasses*, an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed his poem.

'Next day I took a ride with him through some of the most romantic parts of that neighbourhood, and was highly gratified by his conversation. As a specimen of his happiness of conception and strength of expression, I will mention a remark which he made on his fellow-traveller, who was walking at the time a few paces before us. He was a man of a robust but clumsy person; and while Burns was expressing to me the value he entertained for him, on account of his vigorous talents, although they were clouded at times by coarseness of manners; "in short," he added, "his mind is like his body—he has a confounded strong in-kneed sort of a soul."[1]

'Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the Duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted. After leaving Blair, he, by the Duke's advice, visited the Falls of Bruar, and in a few days I received a letter from Inverness, with the verses enclosed.'

The Saturday and Sunday which Burns spent at Blair (1st and 2d September) he afterwards declared to be among the happiest days of his life. The uneasy spirit which so often chafed at the thought of the pride of rank, seems to have been completely soothed by the genial manners of the family and their guests. The family were as much pleased with the poet as he with them; they entreated him to prolong his stay; and he would have complied, but for the eagerness of Nicol to hurry on. Mr Walker tells us that the ladies, in their anxiety to have a little more of the bard's company, sent a servant to the inn, to bribe his driver to loosen or pull a shoe off one of the horses. 'But the ambush failed. *Proh mirum!* The driver was *incorruptible*.'[2] It was the more to be regretted that Burns did not linger a little longer, as Mr Dundas was daily expected as a guest; and to have met that great dispenser of patronage, might have had a favourable influence on his future fortunes. As it was, he was fortunate in meeting Mr Graham of Fintry, for that gentleman afterwards proved a useful friend.

[1] A correspondent makes a whimsical comment on this passage. He is at a loss to understand how Burns should have thought *in-knees* a mark of strength, for to him they have always conveyed a sense of weakness, and he would rather have associated the *opposite curve* with strength. Does not the truth lie *between?*

[2] Letter of Walker to Dr Currie, *Burns's Works*, second edition, ii. 100.

The verses and letter to which Mr Walker alludes at the close of his communication to Currie, were as follow:—

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATER[1] TO THE NOBLE DUKE OF ATHOLE.

My lord, I know your noble ear
  Wo ne'er assails in vain;
Emboldened thus, I beg you 'll hear
  Your humble slave complain,
How saucy Phœbus' scorching beams,
  In flaming summer-pride,
Dry-withering, waste my foamy streams,
  And drink my crystal tide.

The lightly-jumpin' glowrin' trouts, staring
  That through my waters play,
If, in their random, wanton spouts,
  They near the margin stray;
If, hapless chance! they linger lang,
  I 'm scorching up so shallow,
They 're left the whitening stanes amang,
  In gasping death to wallow.

Last day I grat wi' spite and teen, wept—vexation
  As Poet Burns came by,
That to a bard I should be seen
  Wi' half my channel dry:
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,
  Even as I was he shored me; promised
But had I in my glory been,
  He, kneeling, wad adored me.

Here, foaming down the shelvy rocks,
  In twisting strength I rin;
There, high my boiling torrent smokes,
  Wild roaring o'er a linn: cascade
Enjoying large each spring and well,
  As Nature gave them me,
I am, although I say 't mysel',
  Worth gaun a mile to see.

[1] 'The first object of interest that occurs upon the public road after leaving Blair, is a chasm in the hill on the right hand, through which the little river Bruar falls over a series of beautiful cascades. Formerly, the Falls of the Bruar were unadorned by wood; but the poet Burns, being conducted to see them (September 1787), after visiting the Duke of Athole, recommended that they should be invested with that necessary decoration. Accordingly, trees have been thickly planted along the chasm, and are now far advanced to maturity. Throughout this young forest a walk has been cut, and a number of fantastic little grottos erected for the conveniency of those who visit the spot. The river not only makes several distinct falls, but rushes on through a channel, whose roughness and haggard sublimity adds greatly to the merits of the scene, as an object of interest among tourists.'—*Picture of Scotland.*

Would, then, my noble master please
  To grant my highest wishes,
He 'll shade my banks wi' towering trees,
  And bonny spreading bushes.
Delighted doubly then, my lord,
  You 'll wander on my banks,
And listen monie a grateful bird
  Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober laverock, warbling wild, lark
  Shall to the skies aspire;
The gowdspink, Music's gayest child, goldfinch
  Shall sweetly join the choir:
The blackbird strong, the lintwhite clear, linnet
  The mavis mild and mellow; thrush
The robin pensive autumn cheer,
  In all her locks of yellow.

This, too, a covert shall insure
  To shield them from the storm;
And coward maukin sleep secure, hare
  Low in her grassy form:
Here shall the shepherd make his seat,
  To weave his crown of flowers;
Or find a sheltering safe retreat
  From prone descending showers.

And here, by sweet endearing stealth,
  Shall meet the loving pair,
Despising worlds with all their wealth
  As empty idle care.
The flowers shall vie in all their charms
  The hour of heaven to grace,
And birks extend their fragrant arms
  To screen the dear embrace.

Here haply too, at vernal dawn,
  Some musing bard may stray,
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn,
  And misty mountain gray;
Or by the reaper's nightly beam,
  Mild-chequering through the trees,
Rave to my darkly dashing stream,
  Hoarse swelling on the breeze.

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,
  My lowly banks o'erspread,
And view, deep bending in the pool,
  Their shadows' watery bed!

Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest
  My craggy cliffs adorn;
And, for the little songster's nest,
  The close embowering thorn.

So may old Scotia's darling hope,
  Your little angel band,
Spring, like their fathers, up to prop
  Their honoured native land!
So may, through Albion's farthest ken,
  To social-flowing glasses,
The grace be—'Athole's honest men,
  And Athole's bonny lasses!'

TO MR WALKER, BLAIR OF ATHOLE.[1]

INVERNESS, *5th September* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—I have just time to write the foregoing, and to tell you that it was (at least most part of it) the effusion of a half-hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it was extempore, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well as Mr Nicol's chat and the jogging of the chaise would allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honour or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast—what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need! I shall never forget.

The 'little angel band!' I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the Fall of Fyers. I shall never forget the fine family-piece I saw at Blair: the amiable, the truly noble Duchess,[2] with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table—the lovely 'olive plants,' as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother—the beautiful Mrs Graham; the lovely, sweet Miss Cathcart, &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice! My Lord Duke's kind hospitality—markedly kind indeed: Mr Graham of Fintry's charms of conversation: Sir W. Murray's friendship: in short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company, raises an honest glow in my bosom.

The Mrs Graham and Miss Cathcart whom Burns eulogises in the last letter, were daughters of Lord Cathcart, and sisters of the

[1] Mr Walker became professor of humanity (Roman literature) in the University of Glasgow. He wrote a poem, entitled *The Defence of Order*, and a Life of Burns. He died in 1831.

[2] Jane, daughter of Charles, ninth Lord Cathcart. Her Grace did not survive this visit above three years. The 'little angel band' consisted of Lady Charlotte Murray, aged twelve, afterwards the wife of Sir John Menzies of Castle-Menzies; Lady Amelia, aged seven, afterwards Viscountess Strathallan; and Lady Elizabeth, an infant of five months, afterwards Lady Macgregor Murray of Lanrick.

Duchess of Athole. The husband of the first lady was at this time a quiet country gentleman, bearing the appellation of Thomas Graham of Balgowan. Five years after, his lovely wife was snatched from him by death in the very noon of life and beauty. The French war soon after broke out, and Thomas Graham, though in middle life, became a soldier, in order to beguile his mind of its sorrows. He commanded the British troops at the battle of Barossa, and was raised to a peerage by the style of Lord Lynedoch. His aged figure on horseback at reviews in Hyde Park in days not yet long gone by, must be fresh in the recollections of many. He died in 1843, at the advanced age of ninety-four.

Mr Robert Graham of Balgowan, cousin and heir-at-law of Lord Lynedoch, possesses a beautiful portrait by Gainsborough of the lovely woman whom Burns so much admired at Blair. A touching history belongs to it. At the death of his wife, the husband, unable to endure the sight of her counterfeit presentment, caused it to be sent to a picture-frame maker's establishment in London, there to lie till further orders. During the ensuing moiety of a century, he never could make up his mind to behold the image of one so dearly loved and so untimely blighted. He passed his life cheerfully, was fond of society, and had nothing of the monk about him; but he never could look again on this memorial of unutterable wo. It was reserved to his friend and heir Mr Graham, to rescue the picture, and bring it once more to the light of day.

The younger lady, who had been born in Russia while her father was ambassador there, was now just seventeen years of age, and

——— 'A very shower
Of beauty was her earthly dower.'

Professor Walker, in a letter to Burns, relates an anecdote of her bountifulness to a poor cottage female, which places her character in the most amiable light. Sad to tell, this fine young creature was cut off by consumption at four-and-twenty. The whole of these three fair sisters predeceased even our too short-lived poet.]

'Come up the Garry—Falls of Bruar—Dalnacardoch—Dalwhinnie—dine—snow on the hills seventeen feet deep—no corn from Loch-garry to Dalwhinnie—cross the Spey, and come down the stream to Pitnain—straths rich—*les environs* picturesque—Craigow Hill—Ruthven of Badenoch—barracks—wild and magnificent—Rothemurchie on the other side, and Glenmore—Grant of Rothemurchie's poetry—told me by the Duke of Gordon—Strathspey, rich and romantic—breakfast at Aviemore, a wild spot—dine

at Sir James Grant's—Lady Grant, a sweet, pleasant body—come through mist and darkness to Dulsie, to lie [sleep].

'*Tuesday.*—Findhorn River—rocky banks—come on to Castle-Cawdor, where Macbeth murdered King Duncan—saw the bed in which King Duncan was stabbed [a fable]—dine at Kilravock—Mrs Rose, sen., a true chieftain's wife—Fort-George—Inverness.

'*Wednesday.*—Loch Ness—Braes of Ness—General's Hut—Fall of Fyers—Urquhart Castle and Strath.'

[VERSES

WRITTEN WHILE STANDING BY THE FALL OF FYERS, NEAR LOCH NESS.

Among the heathy hills and ragged woods,
The foaming Fyers pours his mossy floods;
Till full he dashes on the rocky mounds,
Where, through a shapeless breach, his stream resounds.
As high in air the bursting torrents flow,
As deep recoiling surges foam below;
Prone down the rock the whitening sheet descends,
And viewless Echo's ear, astonished, rends.
Dim seen, through rising mists and ceaseless showers,
The hoary cavern, wide surrounding, lowers;
Still through the gap the struggling river toils,
And still below, the horrid caldron boils—

* * * *

In the evening, after returning from his drive to the Fall of Fyers, Burns (accompanied, we presume, by Nicol) dined by appointment with Mr Inglis, the provost, who had a party to meet him. He was enraptured with the Highland scenery, but rather thoughtful and silent than otherwise during the evening.]

'*Thursday.*—Come over Culloden Muir—reflections on the field of battle—breakfast at Kilravock'—[He probably was introduced here by Mr Mackenzie, author of the *Man of Feeling*, who was a near relation of the family by his mother]—'old Mrs Rose, sterling sense, warm heart, strong passions, and honest pride, all in an uncommon degree—Mrs Rose, jun., a little milder than the mother; this, perhaps, owing to her being younger—Mr Grant, minister at Calder, resembles Mr Scott at Inverleithen. Mrs Rose and Mrs Grant accompany us to Kildrummie—two young ladies—Miss Rose, who sang two Gaelic songs, beautiful and lovely—Miss Sophia Brodie, most agreeable and amiable—both of them gentle, mild; the sweetest creatures on earth, and happiness be with them!'

[In a letter written in the subsequent February to Mrs Rose, junior, the poet shews a lively and grateful recollection of this happy day. It appears that here also he would have prolonged his stay but for the impatience of Nicol.]

'Dine at Nairn—fall in with a pleasant enough gentleman, Dr Stewart, who had been long abroad with his father in [consequence of] the forty-five; and Mr Falconer, a spare, irascible, warm-hearted Norland, and a non-juror—Brodie House to lie.

'*Friday* [*Sep.* 7].—Forres—famous stone at Forres—Mr Brodie tells me that the muir where Shakspeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still haunted—that the country-folks won't pass it by night.

* * * *

'Venerable ruins of Elgin Abbey [Cathedral]—a grander effect at first glance than Melrose, but not near so beautiful. Cross Spey to Fochabers—fine palace [Gordon Castle, the seat of the Duke of Gordon]—worthy of the generous proprietor—dine. Company—Duke and Duchess, Ladies Charlotte and Magdeline,[1] Colonel Abercrombie and Lady, Mr Gordon, and Mr ——, a clergyman, a venerable aged figure—the Duke makes me happier than ever great man did—noble, princely, yet mild, condescending, and affable; gay and kind—the Duchess witty and sensible—God bless them!'

[Dr Currie obtained some particulars of Burns's too brief visit to Gordon Castle from Dr Couper of Fochabers. 'In the course of the preceding winter,' he says, 'Burns had been introduced to the Duchess of Gordon at Edinburgh; and, presuming on this acquaintance, he proceeded to Gordon Castle, leaving Mr Nicol at the inn in the village. At the castle, our poet was received with the utmost hospitality and kindness; and the family being about to sit down to dinner, he was invited to take his place at table as a matter of course. This invitation he accepted, and after drinking a few glasses of wine, he rose up, and proposed to withdraw. On being pressed to stay, he mentioned, for the first time, his engagement with his fellow-traveller; and his noble host offering to send a servant to conduct Mr Nicol to the castle, Burns insisted on undertaking that office himself. He was, however, accompanied by a gentleman, a particular acquaintance of the Duke, by whom the invitation was delivered in all the forms of politeness. The invitation came too late; the pride of Nicol was inflamed into a high degree of passion by the neglect which he had already

[1] Lady Charlotte, who was now nineteen years of age, afterwards became Duchess of Richmond, and was the mother of the present duke. Lady Madelina married Sir Robert Sinclair of Murkle.

suffered. He had ordered the horses to be put to the carriage, being determined to proceed on his journey alone; and they found him parading the streets of Fochabers, before the door of the inn, venting his anger on the postilion for the slowness with which he obeyed his commands. As no explanation nor entreaty could change the purpose of his fellow-traveller, our poet was reduced to the necessity of separating from him entirely, or of instantly proceeding with him on their journey. He chose the last of these alternatives; and seating himself beside Nicol in the postchaise, with mortification and regret he turned his back on Gordon Castle, where he had promised himself some happy days. Sensible, however, of the great kindness of the noble family, he made the best return in his power by the following poem:—

CASTLE-GORDON.

'"Streams that glide in Orient plains,
Never bound by Winter's chains;
Glowing here on golden sands,
There commixed with foulest stains
From tyranny's empurpled bands;
These, their richly-gleaming waves,
I leave to tyrants and their slaves;
Give me the stream that sweetly laves
The banks by Castle-Gordon.

Spicy forests, ever gay,
Shading from the burning ray
Helpless wretches sold to toil,
Or the ruthless native's way,
Bent on slaughter, blood, and spoil:
Woods that ever verdant wave,
I leave the tyrant and the slave;
Give me the groves that lofty brave
The storms by Castle-Gordon.

Wildly here, without control,
Nature reigns and rules the whole;
In that sober, pensive mood,
Dearest to the feeling soul,
She plants the forest, pours the flood;
Life's poor day I'll musing rave,
And find at night a sheltering cave,
Where waters flow and wild woods wave,
By bonny Castle-Gordon."'[1]

[1] Designed to be sung to *Morag*, a Highland tune, of which Burns was extremely fond.—CURRIE.

Allan Cunningham states, that the Duchess of Gordon was good enough to plan a visit of Mr Henry Addington (afterwards Lord Sidmouth) to Gordon Castle, when Burns and Dr Beattie should meet him, knowing that the English statesman was a warm admirer of the poetry of the former, and might readily be of use to him. 'The future premier,' says Allan, 'was unable to accept the invitation; but wrote and forwarded, it is said, these memorable lines—memorable as the first indication of that deep love which England now entertains for the genius of Burns:—

'"Yes! pride of Scotia's favoured plains, 'tis thine
The warmest feelings of the heart to move;
To bid it throb with sympathy divine,
To glow with friendship or to melt with love.

What though each morning sees thee rise to toil,
Though Plenty on thy cot no blessing showers,
Yet Independence cheers thee with her smile,
And Fancy strews thy moorland with her flowers!

And dost thou blame the impartial will of Heaven,
Untaught of life the good and ill to scan?
To thee the Muse's choicest wreath is given—
To thee the genuine dignity of man!

Then, to the want of worldly gear resigned,
Be grateful for the wealth of thy exhaustless mind."'

Dr Walker, in his *Life of Burns*, expresses in pretty strong terms his sense of Burns's misfortune in being accompanied on this occasion by a man whom he could scarcely introduce to scenes where delicacy and self-denial are so much required. At Blair, Dr Walker informs us, the impatience of the rude pedagogue had been suspended by engaging him in his favourite amusement of angling.]

'Come to Cullen to lie—hitherto the country is sadly poor and unimproven.'

[The travellers breakfasted next morning, Saturday, 8th September, at Banff, with the master of the grammar-school there, Dr Chapman, who had been Nicol's superior in the same situation at Dumfries in years long gone by. A boy of thirteen, who was then a pet pupil of the morning Greek class, and was asked by Chapman to join the party, related many years afterwards his recollections of what passed:[1]

'During breakfast, Burns played off some sportive jests at his

[1] The narration appeared in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, vol. viii. p. 405.

touchy *compagnon de voyage,* about some misunderstanding which took place between them at Fochabers, in consequence of Burns having visited the castle without him; and the good old doctor seemed much amused with the way the poet chose to smoothe down the yet lurking ire of the dominie. After breakfast, Dr Chapman sent me to the bookseller's shop for a new copy of the *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland,* by the Reverend Charles Cordiner, minister of the English Chapel in Banff, which he presented as a mark of his regard to Mr Nicol, and for a useful guide-book to the travellers in their progress. As they were to visit Duff House, the splendid mansion of the Earl of Fife, and drive through the park on their way south, after delivering the book to Mr Nicol I accompanied the two gentlemen from the town to the house, carrying a note to the steward there from my father, that they might see the interior of the house, the paintings, and valuable library. In driving through the park, Mr Nicol, while engaged in looking at the plates of the book, asked me whether I was aware that the gentleman who was speaking to me about the park was the author of the poems I had no doubt heard of. "Yes," I replied; "Dr Chapman told me so when he asked me to breakfast." "Then, have you read the poems?" "Oh, yes! I was glad to do that," was my reply. "Then, which of them did you like best?" Nicol asked. I said: "I was much entertained with the *Twa Dogs,* and *Death and Dr Hornbook;* but I like best by far the *Cotter's Saturday Night,* although it made me *greet* when my father had me to read it to my mother."

'Burns, with a sort of sudden start, looked in my face intently, and patting my shoulder, said: "Well, my callant, I don't wonder at your *greeting* at reading the poem; it made me *greet* more than once when I was writing it at *my* father's fireside."

'I recollect very well that while Mr Nicol loitered in the library, looking at the fine collection of old classics there, Burns, taking me with him for a guide, went a second time through some of the rooms to look at the old paintings, with the catalogue in his hand, and remarked particularly those of the Stuart family in the great drawing-room, on which he seemed to look with intense interest, making some remarks on them to his *boy*-guide, which the *man* fails to recollect. But the face and look of Robert Burns were such as, either boy or man, he never could forget.']

'Come to Aberdeen—meet with Mr Chalmers, printer, a facetious fellow—Mr Ross, a fine fellow, like Professor Tytler—Mr Marshall, one of the *poetæ minores*—Mr Sheriffs, author of *Jamie and*

Bess, a little decrepit body, with some abilities[1]—Bishop Skinner, a non-juror, son of the author of *Tullochgorum:* a man whose mild, venerable manner is the most marked of any in so young a man—Professor Gordon, a good-natured, jolly-looking professor—Aberdeen a lazy town.'

[It was at the printing-office of Mr Chalmers that Burns met the mild, composed-looking man who bore the title of Bishop Skinner. To the Ayrshire poet this was an interesting person, not so much on account of the office he bore in the cavalier Episcopal Church of Scotland, as because he was the son of one who had written popular songs in the vernacular language. Burns, being made aware of the parentage of the worthy bishop, entered into conversation with him regarding his father; and on learning that he lived at Linshart, near Longmay, a village to the west of Peterhead, which he had now thrown far into his rear, expressed great regret for his ignorance of the old poet's locality, as he said he would have gladly gone twenty miles out of his way to see him. Such was the importance which he attached to the composition of the song of *Tullochgorum*. It is a pity that he did not see the venerable Skinner at his cottage-parsonage, for it would have been a lesson of religious contentment that could scarcely have failed to touch and improve his spirit. He would have found the old parson living in what was literally a cottage—what is called in Scotland *a butt and a ben*—with earthen-floors and grateless fireplaces, not enjoying an income equal to that of a foreman in a common workshop, yet cheerful, and even mirthful, and the centre of a family circle in which would have been found many elegances and accomplishments. It would be well for more than unendowed poets to see how independent is the truest luxury of life—the refinement and joy of an elevated and cheerful nature—upon the external accidents of fortune.

From Aberdeen, Burns proceeded southward into Kincardineshire, the native county of his father, and where the most of his paternal kindred still resided. As he had eminently that Scottish heart which acknowledges 'bluid to be thicker than water,' he felt deep interest in entering upon this district, where he expected to meet with many hitherto unseen relatives. Unfortunately, he has not been very communicative as to these persons, or the incidents of his sojourn amongst them.]

[1] Mr Sheriffs published, in 1790, a volume of *Poems in the Scottish Dialect*, one of many such brought forth by the *éclat* of the Ayrshire bard, but brought forth in vain.

'Near Stonehive [Stonehaven],' he says, 'the coast a good deal romantic. Meet my relations. Robert Burns, writer in Stonehive, one of those who love fun, a gill, and a punning joke, and have not a bad heart—his wife a sweet, hospitable body, without any affectation of what is called town-breeding.

'*Tuesday.*—Breakfast with Mr Burns—lie at Lawrence-kirk—Album—library—Mrs ——, a jolly, frank, sensible, love-inspiring widow—Howe of the Mearns, a rich, cultivated, but still unenclosed country.

'*Wednesday.*—Cross North Esk River and a rich country to Craigow.' * * *

[He then says, with provoking brevity, 'Go to Montrose, that finely situated, handsome town.' He here found his cousin, Mr James Burnes, in creditable circumstances as a writer or legal agent, and therefore a member of the upper circle of society. A second Mr James Burnes, son of that gentleman, and father of Sir Alexander Burnes of Cabul memory, was then a little boy, and he could afterwards only remember sitting for a while upon the bard's knee. The journal proceeds]—'Breakfast [Sep. 13] at Muthie, and sail along that wild, rocky coast, and see the famous caverns, particularly the Gairiepot—land and dine at Arbroath—stately ruins of Arbroath Abbey—come to Dundee through a fertile country—Dundee a low-lying but pleasant town—old steeple—Tay frith—Broughty Castle, a finely situated ruin, jutting into the Tay.

'*Friday.*—Breakfast with the Miss Scotts—Miss Bess Scott like Mrs Greenfield—my bardship almost in love with her—come through the rich harvests and fine hedgerows of the Carse of Gowrie, along the romantic margin of the Grampian Hills to Perth—fine, fruitful, hilly, woody country round Perth.'

[From the little which remains of the journal, it is observable how vigilant was his interest regarding the localities of Scottish songs. He seems to have taken measures for being introduced to the Belches family at Invermay, near Perth, in order that he might see the pretty little valley of that name celebrated in a well-known song, *The Birks of Invermay*. He also was studious to learn the whereabouts of the spot consecrated by the hapless ballad history of *Bessie Bell and Mary Gray*.]

'*Saturday Morning.*—Leave Perth—come up Strathearn to Endermay—fine, fruitful, cultivated Strath—the scene of *Bessie Bell and Mary Gray* near Perth—fine scenery on the banks of the May—Mrs Belches, gawcy, frank, affable, fond of rural

sports, hunting, &c.—Lie at Kinross—reflections in a fit of the colic.

'*Sunday* [*Sep.* 16].—Pass through a cold, barren country to Queensferry—dine—cross the ferry, and on to Edinburgh.'

TO MR GILBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 17*th September* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR [1]—I arrived here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near 600 miles, windings included. My furthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of Lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and Druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the Duke of Athole; thence across Tay, and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the Duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending nearly two days with his Grace and family; thence many miles through a wild country among cliffs gray with eternal snows and gloomy savage glens till I crossed Spey, and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music; [2] Badenoch, &c., till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort-George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed in which tradition says King Duncan was murdered; lastly, from Fort-George to Inverness.

I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen, thence to Stonehive [Stonehaven], where James Burnes, from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts, Jean and Isabel,[3] still alive, and hale old women. John Caird,[4] though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can—they have had several letters from his son in New York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay till I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing: warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his very grave, what cared I for fishing-towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at

[1] This appears a singular term for Burns to have employed in addressing his brother, but so it is in the original manuscript, possibly by oversight.

[2] A quick kind of dancing-tunes are called Strathspeys, from this vale, the place of their nativity.

[3] Jean married John Burness, tenant of Bogjorgan. Isabel married William Brand, at Auchenblae, mentioned below.

[4] John Caird was the husband of Elspeth, another of the sisters. He is described as 'in Denside of Dunnottar.'

Gordon Castle next day, with the Duke, Duchess, and family. I am thinking to cause my old mare to meet me, by means of John Ronald,[1] at Glasgow; but you shall hear further from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty and many compliments from the north to my mother; and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a berth for William,[2] but am not likely to be successful. Farewell. R. B.

Journeying through the Highlands with a Jacobite companion, Burns could not but feel a little more enthusiastic than he generally did regarding the memory of the Stuarts. His visit to the natal district of those ancestors whom he believed to have followed the Cavalier standard, would give increased energy to his feelings of romantic loyalty. Connecting these considerations with the fact of Prince Charles having this very month declared the legitimacy of his hitherto supposed natural daughter styled Duchess of Albany, I deem it probable that it was at this time that Burns composed a song in honour of that lady which has not till now seen the light. The Prince had, as is well known, lived many years with Clementina Walkinshaw, who bore him this single child. There are some who, not without grounds, believe that he was married to the lady. The Jacobites, who had long deplored his being without ostensible legitimate offspring, heard with a throb of melancholy interest that his one child, whatever were the circumstances of her birth, was legitimated by a deed registered (September 6, 1787) by the parliament of Paris. We can imagine Burns led by the intelligence into a reverie of those politics of the heart by which he did not disdain to admit that he was animated, and in that reverie composing, in imitation of the old-ballad manner,

THE BONNY LASS OF ALBANY.

TUNE—*Mary's Dream.*

My heart is wae, and unco wae,
  To think upon the raging sea,
That roars between her gardens green
  And the bonny Lass of Albany.

This lovely maid 's of royal blood
  That rulèd Albion's kingdoms three,
But oh, alas! for her bonny face,
  They 've wranged the Lass of Albany.

[1] A carrier between Mauchline and Glasgow; uncle to William Ronald, ploughman at Mossgiel, for whose testimony to the eloquence of the poet's family prayers, see vol. i. p. 161.

[2] A younger brother of the poet, who had been brought up as a saddler.

In the rolling tide of spreading Clyde
  There sits an isle of high degree,[1]
And a town of fame whose princely name
  Should grace the Lass of Albany.[2]

But there 's a youth, a witless youth,
  That fills the place where she should be;[3]
We 'll send him o'er to his native shore,
  And bring our ain sweet Albany.

Alas the day, and wo the day,
  A false usurper wan the gree, superiority
Who now commands the towers and lands—
  The royal right of Albany.

We 'll daily pray, we 'll nightly pray,
  On bended knees most fervently,
The time may come, with pipe and drum,
  We 'll welcome hame fair Albany.[4]

On the 28th of September, Burns was still in Edinburgh. At his meeting with Mr Miller of Dalswinton in June, he had promised to return in August, in order to look more carefully over his farms. He had been unable to fulfil this engagement, and he could not even now contemplate an immediate visit to Dumfriesshire. We have a letter written by him to Mr Miller on the above day, explanatory of his intended movements, and containing some characteristic sentiments:[5]—

TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ., DALSWINTON.

EDINBURGH, 28*th September* 1787.

SIR—I have been on a tour through the Highlands, and arrived in town but the other day, so could not wait on you at Dalswinton about the latter end of August, as I had promised and intended.

Independent of any views of future connections, what I owe

[1] Bute.

[2] Rothesay, the county town of Bute, gave a title to the eldest sons of the kings of Scotland (Duke of Rothesay).

[3] An allusion to the Prince of Wales.

[4] Prince Charles, at his death in 1788, left the Duchess of Albany his sole heir, but she did not long survive him. The above song is printed from a portion of a manuscript book in Burns's handwriting, which is now in the possession of Mr B. Nightingale, London. It occurs after the verses on the Stirling window, under the title of *A Song by the Same Hand.*

[5] I am indebted for a copy of this letter to Mr W. C. Aitken, Broad Street, Birmingham.

you for the past, as a friend and benefactor, when friends I had few, and benefactors I had none, strongly in my bosom prohibits the most distant instance of ungrateful disrespect. I am informed you do not come to town for a month still, and within that time I shall certainly wait on you, as by this time I suppose you will have settled your scheme with respect to your farms.

My journey through the Highlands was perfectly inspiring, and I hope I have laid in a good stock of new poetical ideas from it. I shall make no apology for sending you the enclosed: it is a small but grateful tribute to the memory of our common countryman.[1] I have the honour to be, with the most grateful sincerity, sir, your obliged humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—I have added another poem,[2] partly as it alludes to some folks nearly and dearly connected with Ayrshire, and partly as rhymes are the only coin in which the poor poet can pay his debts of gratitude. The lady alluded to is Miss Isabella M'Leod, aunt to the young Countess of Loudon.

As I am determined not to leave Edinburgh till I wind up my matters with Mr Creech, which I am afraid will be a tedious business, should I unfortunately miss you at Dalswinton, perhaps your factor will be able to inform me of your intentions with respect to the Elesland farm [*so in MS.*], which will save me a jaunt to Edinburgh again.

There is something so suspicious in the professions of attachment from a little man to a great man, that I know not how to do justice to the grateful warmth of my heart, when I would say how truly I am interested in the welfare of your little troop of angels, and how much I have the honour to be again, sir, your obliged humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

When worthy Mr Skinner learned from his son the bishop, or, as he called him, his *chill* (that is, chiel or child), that Burns had passed near his residence and missed seeing him, though anxious to do so, he felt a regret corresponding to that of the Ayrshire Bard, for, though now near seventy, his poetical and social affections were as vivid as ever. He resolved, as the next best, to attempt an interchange of correspondence with Burns, in the style of certain versified epistles which Allan Ramsay and Hamilton of Gilbertfield had launched at each other. His own first address to our bard, dated the 25th of September, opens with an expression of his joy

[1] Evidently, from the expression 'our common countryman,' referring to the Elegy on Sir James Hunter Blair—Mr Miller being, like Sir James and the poet, a native of Ayrshire.

[2] The Verses on the Death of Mr John M'Leod.

that his son had met Burns, joined with a lament for his own absence on the interesting occasion:—

'Oh happy hour for evermair,
That led my chill up Chalmers' stair,[1]
And ga'e him what he values sair
Sae braw a skance — sight
Of Ayrshire's dainty poet there
By lucky chance.

Waes my auld heart, I was na wi' you,
Though worth-your-while I couldna gie you,
But sin' I hadna hap to see you,
When ye was north,
I'm bauld to send my service to you,
Hence o'er the Forth.'

After some verses expressing admiration of Burns and his several poems, the kind old man urges further labours in the field of poesy, and concludes by proposing a correspondence:—

'———thanks to Praise, you're in your prime,
And may chant on this lang, lang time;
For, let me tell you, 'twere a crime
To haud your tongue,
Wi' sic a knack ye hae at rhyme,
And you sae young.

Ye ken it's no for ane like me
To be sae droll as ye can be;
But ony help that I can gie,
Though 't be but sma',
Your least command, I'll let you see,
Shall gar me draw.

An hour or twa, by hook or crook,
And maybe three, some orra ouk, — odd week
That I can spare frae haly beuk — holy book
(For that's my hobby),
I'll steal awa' to some bye-neuk,
And crack wi' Robie. — converse

Wad ye but only crack again,
* * * *

Sae canty Ploughman, fare ye weel;
Lord bless ye lang wi' ha'e and heal, — have—health
And keep ye aye the honest chiel
That ye hae been,
Syne lift ye to a better biel, — shelter
Whan this is dune.' — done

Rhymer Robin greatly enjoyed any such recognition from an elder brother in the Muses, for these men had been the gods of his

[1] The stair of Mr Chalmers's printing-office in Aberdeen, where Burns was when Bishop Skinner encountered him.

idolatry during his youthful and obscure days, when he did not hope to be ever heard of beyond the bounds of his own parish. He did not, however, answer immediately; and when he did, it was not in 'rhyming ware:'—

TO THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

[EDINBURGH, *October* 25, 1787.]

REVEREND AND VENERABLE SIR—Accept, in plain dull prose, my most sincere thanks for the best poetical compliment I ever received. I assure you, sir, as a poet, you have conjured up an airy demon of vanity in my fancy, which the best abilities in your other capacity would be ill able to lay. I regret, and while I live I shall regret, that when I was in the north, I had not the pleasure of paying a younger brother's dutiful respect to the author of the best Scotch song ever Scotland saw—*Tullochgorum's my Delight!* The world may think slightingly of the craft of song-making, if they please; but, as Job says, 'Oh that mine adversary had written a book!'—let them try. There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought and expression, which peculiarly marks them, not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of song-wrights, in our native manner and language. The only remains of this enchantment, these spells of the imagination, rest with you. Our true brother, Ross of Lochlee, was likewise 'owre cannie'—'a wild warlock'—but now he sings among the 'sons of the morning.'

I have often wished, and will certainly endeavour to form a kind of common acquaintance among all the genuine sons of Caledonian song. The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us; but 'reverence thyself.' The world is not our *peers*, so we challenge the jury. We can lash that world, and find ourselves a very great source of amusement and happiness independent of that world.

There is a work going on in Edinburgh just now which claims your best assistance. An engraver in this town has set about collecting and publishing all the Scotch songs, with the music, that can be found. Songs in the English language, if by Scotchmen, are admitted, but the music must all be Scotch. Drs Beattie and Blacklock are lending a hand, and the first musician in town presides over that department. I have been absolutely crazed about it, collecting old stanzas, and every information remaining respecting their origin, authors, &c. &c. This last is but a very fragment business; but at the end of his second number—the first is already published—a small account will be given of the authors, particularly to preserve those of latter times. Your three songs, *Tullochgorum, John of Badenyon,* and *Ewie wi' the Crookit Horn,* go in this second number. I was determined, before I got your

letter, to write you, begging that you would let me know where the editions of these pieces may be found, as you would wish them to continue in future times; and if you would be so kind to this undertaking as send any songs, of your own or others, that you would think proper to publish, your name will be inserted among the other authors—'Nill ye, will ye.' One-half of Scotland already give your songs to other authors. Paper is done. I beg to hear from you; the sooner the better, as I leave Edinburgh in a fortnight or three weeks. I am, with the warmest sincerity, sir, your obliged humble servant, R. B.

To this letter Mr Skinner sent the following reply:—

LINSHART, 14*th November* 1787.

SIR—Your kind return without date, but of post-mark October 25th, came to my hand only this day; and to testify my punctuality to my poetic engagement, I sit down immediately to answer it in kind. Your acknowledgment of my poor but just encomiums on your surprising genius, and your opinion of my rhyming excursions, are both, I think, by far too high. The difference between our two tracks of education and ways of life is entirely in your favour, and gives you the preference every manner of way. I know a classical education will not create a versifying taste, but it mightily improves and assists it; and though, where both these meet, there may sometimes be ground for approbation, yet where taste appears single, as it were, and neither cramped nor supported by acquisition, I will always sustain the justice of its prior claim to applause. A small portion of taste, this way, I have had almost from childhood, especially in the old Scottish dialect: and it is as old a thing as I remember, my fondness for *Christ-kirk o' the Green*, which I had by heart ere I was twelve years of age, and which some years ago I attempted to turn into Latin verse. While I was young, I dabbled a good deal in these things; but on getting the black gown, I gave it pretty much over, till my daughters grew up, who, being all good singers, plagued me for words to some of their favourite tunes, and so extorted these effusions, which have made a public appearance beyond my expectations, and contrary to my intentions, at the same time that I hope there is nothing to be found in them uncharacteristic or unbecoming the cloth, which I would always wish to see respected.

As to the assistance you propose from me in the undertaking you are engaged in,[1] I am sorry I cannot give it so far as I could wish and you perhaps expect. My daughters, who were my only intelligencers, are all *foris-familiate*, and the old woman their mother has lost that taste. There are two from my own pen, which I might give you, if worth the while. One to the old Scotch tune of *Dumbarton's Drums*. The other, perhaps, you have met with, as your

[1] *Johnson's Museum.*

noble friend the Duchess has, I am told, heard of it. It was squeezed out of me by a brother parson in her neighbourhood, to accommodate a new Highland reel for the Marquis's birthday,[1] to the stanza of

'Tune your fiddles, tune them sweetly,' &c.

If this last answer your purpose, you may have it from a brother of mine, Mr James Skinner, writer in Edinburgh, who, I believe, can give the music too.

There is another humorous thing I have heard, said to be done by the Catholic priest Geddes,[2] and which hit my taste much:—

'There was a wee wifeikie, was coming frae the fair,
Had gotten a little drapikie, which bred her meikle care;
It took upo' the wifie's heart, and she began to spew,
And quo' the wee wifeikie, I wish I binna fou.
I wish,' &c. &c.

I have heard of another new composition, by a young ploughman of my acquaintance, that I am vastly pleased with, to the tune of *The Humours of Glen*, which I fear won't do, as the music, I am told, is of Irish original. I have mentioned these, such as they are, to shew my readiness to oblige you, and to contribute my mite, if I could, to the patriotic work you have in hand, and which I wish all success to. You have only to notify your mind, and what you want of the above shall be sent you.

Meantime, while you are thus publicly, I may say, employed, do not sheathe your own proper and piercing weapon. From what I have seen of yours already, I am inclined to hope for much good. One lesson of virtue and morality, delivered in your amusing style, and from such as you, will operate more than dozens would do from such as me, who shall be told it is our employment, and be never more minded: whereas, from a pen like yours, as being one of the many, what comes will be admired. Admiration will produce regard, and regard will leave an impression, especially when example goes along.

'Now, binna saying I 'm ill-bred, — be not
Else, by my troth, I 'll no be glad;
For cadgers, ye have heard it said, — hucksters
And sic-like fry,
Maun aye be harland in their trade, — dragging
And sae maun I.'

Wishing you, from my poet pen, all success, and, in my other character, all happiness and heavenly direction, I remain, with esteem, your sincere friend, JOHN SKINNER.

[1] The Marquis of Huntly, eldest son of the Duke of Gordon.

[2] Geddes is now believed not to have been the author of this poem.

Before Burns had been many days in Edinburgh after his return from the north, he had to fulfil a promise to Charlotte Hamilton, and thus wrote to her friend, Miss Chalmers, now at Harvieston:—

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Sept. 26, 1787.

I send Charlotte the first number of the songs;[1] I would not wait for the second number; I hate delays in little marks of friendship as I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart. I am determined to pay Charlotte a poetic compliment, if I could hit on some glorious old Scotch air, in number second. You will see a small attempt on a shred of paper in the book; but though Dr Blacklock commended it very highly, I am not just satisfied with it myself. I intend to make it a description of some kind: the whining cant of love, except in real passion, and by a masterly hand, is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant of old Father Smeaton, Whig minister at Kilmaurs. Darts, flames, Cupids, loves, graces, and all that farrago, are just a Mauchline ——, a senseless rabble.

I got an excellent poetic epistle yesternight from the old venerable author of *Tullochgorum, John of Badenyon,* &c.[2] I suppose you know he is a clergyman. It is by far the finest poetic compliment I ever got. I will send you a copy of it.

I go on Thursday or Friday to Dumfries, to wait on Mr Miller about his farms. Do tell that to Lady Mackenzie, that she may give me credit for a little wisdom. 'I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence.' What a blessed fireside! How happy should I be to pass a winter evening under their venerable roof, and smoke a pipe of tobacco, or drink water-gruel with them! With solemn, lengthened, laughter-quashing gravity of phiz! What sage remarks on the good-for-nothing sons and daughters of Indiscretion and Folly! And what frugal lessons, as we straitened the fireside circle, on the uses of the poker and tongs!

Miss N[immo][3] is very well, and begs to be remembered in the old way to you. I used all my eloquence, all the persuasive flourishes of the hand, and heart-melting modulation of periods in my power, to urge her out to Harvieston; but all in vain. My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind. I have seen the day—but this is a 'tale of other years.' In my conscience, I believe that my heart has been so oft on fire, that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night. I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship; I am charmed with the

[1] The first volume of the *Scots Musical Museum.*

[2] From this allusion, it may be suspected that, by some mistake, the date assigned to the letter is too early by one or two days.

[3] Miss Erskine Nimmo, a friend of Miss Chalmers, residing in Edinburgh.

wild but graceful eccentricity of their motions; and—wish them good-night. I mean this with respect to a certain passion *dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'être un misérable esclave:* as for friendship, you and Charlotte have given me pleasure, permanent pleasure, 'which the world cannot give nor take away,' I hope, and which will outlast the heavens and the earth. R. B.

The wish of Burns for an immediate review of Mr Miller's farms does not appear to have been gratified. Before October was far advanced, he had undoubtedly left the capital on an excursion of a different character, and in a different direction. There were various objects to be accomplished. He wished to see more of the pleasant family at Harvieston, now so agreeably augmented. He desired, probably for more solidly prudent reasons, to take advantage of the invitation which Sir William Murray of Ochtertyre had given him at Blair. He also bore a letter of introduction from Dr Blacklock for Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre (a different place, near Stirling), a gentleman eminently qualified to appreciate his genius, and also to assist in his literary schemes. The poet started in company with Dr James M'Kittrick Adair, a young relative of his friend Mrs Dunlop. Dr Adair gave Dr Currie an account of the tour, which may be received as faithful in most particulars, but deficient in some, and referring to a wrong period.

'Burns and I,' he says, 'left Edinburgh in August 1787.' It will be seen in a note referred to below,[1] that the circumstances alluded to by Dr Adair himself require a later date. He continues: 'We rode by Linlithgow and Carron, to Stirling. We visited the ironworks at Carron, with which the poet was forcibly struck. The resemblance between that place and its inhabitants to the cave of the Cyclops, which must have occurred to every classical reader, presented itself to Burns. At Stirling, the prospects from the castle strongly interested him: in a former visit to which, his national feelings had been powerfully excited by the ruinous and roofless state of the hall in which the Scottish parliaments had frequently been held. His indignation had vented itself in some imprudent, but not unpoetical lines, which had given much offence, and which he took this opportunity of erasing, by breaking the pane of the window at the inn on which they were written.'

Burns, it is said, finding the minister of Gladsmuir's reproof below his lines, dashed out the pane with the but-end of his whip.

[1] Appendix, No. 12.

He did not, however, allow the reproof to pass without comment, as the following couplet composed regarding it shews:—

> Like Esop's lion, Burns says, 'Sore I feel
> All others' scorn, but damn that ass's heel!'

'At Stirling,' continues Dr Adair, 'we met with a company of travellers from Edinburgh, among whom was a character in many respects congenial with that of Burns. This was Nicol, one of the teachers of the High Grammar-School at Edinburgh—the same wit and power of conversation, the same fondness for convivial society, and thoughtlessness of to-morrow, characterised both. Jacobitical principles in politics were common to both of them; and these have been suspected, since the revolution of France, to have given place in each to opinions apparently opposite. I regret that I have preserved no *memorabilia* of their conversation, either on this or on other occasions, when I happened to meet them together. Many songs were sung; which I mention for the sake of observing, that when Burns was called on in his turn, he was accustomed, instead of singing, to recite one or other of his own shorter poems, with a tone and emphasis which, though not correct or harmonious, were impressive and pathetic. This he did on the present occasion.

'From Stirling we went next morning through the romantic and fertile vale of Devon to Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, then inhabited by Mrs Hamilton, with the younger part of whose family Burns had been previously acquainted. He introduced me to the family, and there was formed my first acquaintance with Mrs Hamilton's eldest daughter, to whom I have been married for nine years.[1] Thus was I indebted to Burns for a connection from which I have derived, and expect further to derive, much happiness.'

The two travellers, it appears from family recollections, arrived at Harvieston somewhat inopportunely, for, to speak the plain truth, the servile powers of the establishment were about to be engaged in the great washing of the year, and in those days it was not thought improper for young ladies even of the state and accomplishments of the Misses Hamilton and Miss Margaret Chalmers, to take some concern in the preparations for that important business. The embarrassment of the young ladies was rather increased than diminished, when Charlotte, having gone to see who had arrived, came back reporting to her sister Grizel

[1] Nov. 16, 1789. At Harvieston, Dr James Adair to Miss Charlotte Hamilton.—*Scots Magazine.*

and Miss Chalmers, that, besides their acquaintance Burns, there was an *English* stranger—one, too, of whom she could discover nothing but that he seemed to know an immense number of 'fine people.' Mrs Hamilton and the young ladies, nevertheless, contrived to perform the due rites of hospitality to their guests. They, in their turn, were pleased with the family party in which they mingled, and particularly with the beautiful Charlotte. Mrs Hamilton afterwards acknowledged that, the two gentlemen being lodged in a chamber divided from hers only by a wainscot partition, she was made aware against her will that their chat for an hour after retiring referred to nothing but the attractions of her daughter.

Burns seems to have intended to stay for a very short time at Harvieston. He was, however, detained by a violent storm, accompanied by heavy floods, which took place on the 10th of October. To continue Dr Adair's narration—

'During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to visit various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest: particularly Castle-Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle; the famous cataract of the Devon, called the Caldron Linn; and the Rumbling Bridge, a single broad arch, thrown by the devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. I am surprised that none of these scenes should have called forth an exertion of Burns's Muse. But I doubt if he had much taste for the picturesque. I well remember, that the ladies at Harvieston, who accompanied us on this jaunt, signified their disappointment at his not expressing, in more glowing and fervid language, his impressions of the Caldron Linn scene, certainly highly sublime, and somewhat horrible.'

Among these excursions, though Dr Adair makes no allusion to it, we must include one which the poet made by himself to visit the two Ochtertyres. A forenoon's ride would bring him to the Tusculum of Mr Ramsay on the Teith, where his reception was so cordial, that he promised, if possible, to see his worthy host a second time on his return.

Mr Ramsay was a noted specimen of the scholarly country gentleman of the last age, living in Horatian ease and unpretending simplicity on his paternal acres. He had a great love of Scottish literature and history, and thus was eminently disposed to admire and sympathise with Burns. Ere many years went about, he

received into the same house a young poet, destined in time to be even more distinguished than his present visitor. I allude, of course, to the briefless advocate, Walter Scott, then engaged in visiting the romantic scenery of Scotland, and storing his mind with such tales as Mr Ramsay had to tell. After a mere call, Burns seems to have proceeded to Ochtertyre in Strathearn, in order to visit Sir William Murray.

I am inclined—though, it must be confessed, for no very substantial reasons—to suspect that Burns did not ride across the Muir of Orchil merely to spend a few luxurious days in aristocratic society; still less to see scenery which he had passed over so lately as August. Sir William Murray was the cousin-german and intimate friend of Mr Graham of Fintry, a commissioner of Excise, whom Burns had met in Sir William's company at Blair. It seems not impossible that, amidst the glowings of the poetical mind, there might lurk some particle of Scottish sense and foresight, pointing out that it was well for the bard to cultivate the acquaintance of this section of the great folks to whom recent circumstances had introduced him. There are many traits of the man which sufficiently prove his not being deficient in such solid sense, albeit it never acquired any ascendancy in the texture of his life, and never dimmed or dulled in the slightest degree either the bright glow of his imagination, or the genial warmth of his social affections.

However this might be, Burns appears to have much enjoyed the few days he spent at Ochtertyre. The singular beauty of the place, and of the semi-Highland district in which it is situated, is well known. Sir William was an amiable and intelligent country gentleman, who had already at Blair shewn a friendly disposition towards the bard. His wife, Lady Augusta—a fine-looking woman in the maturity of her charms—must have been interesting to Burns from associations connected with her parentage; for she was a daughter of the insurgent Earl of Cromarty, who so narrowly escaped accompanying Kilmarnock and Balmerino to the scaffold on Tower Hill in 1746. Born in the Tower, not long after that harassing time, during which her mother was anxiously engaged in pleading for the earl's life, she bore what all her friends believed to be the image of an axe upon her neck.[1] The Jacobitical

[1] Sir William and Lady Augusta Murray were the parents of Sir George Murray, Wellington's quarter-master-general in the Peninsula, who represented Perthshire in several parliaments, and was at one time secretary for the colonies.

It is commonly supposed that the Countess was pregnant at the time when her husband

feelings of Burns must have been pleasingly excited in such society. That he was in other respects agreeably situated, appears from two short letters addressed to friends in Edinburgh:—

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL.

AUCHTERTYRE, *Monday* [*Oct.* 15, 1787].

MY DEAR SIR—I find myself very comfortable here, neither oppressed by ceremony nor mortified by neglect. Lady Augusta is a most engaging woman, and very happy in her family, which makes one's outgoings and incomings very agreeable. I called at Mr Ramsay's of Auchtertyre as I came up the country, and am so delighted with him, that I shall certainly accept of his invitation to spend a day or two with him as I return. I leave this place on Wednesday or Thursday.

Make my kind compliments to Mr and Mrs Cruikshank, and Mrs Nicol, if she is returned. I am ever, dear sir, your deeply indebted R. B.

[TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.][1]

AUCHTERTYRE, *Monday* [*Oct.* 15, 1787].

I have nothing, my dear sir, to write to you, but that I feel myself exceedingly comfortably situated in this good family—just notice enough to make me easy, but not to embarrass me. I was storm-staid two days at the foot of the Ochil Hills, with Mr Tait of Herveyston and Mr Johnston of Alva; but was so well pleased, that I shall certainly spend a day on the banks of the Devon as I return. I leave this place, I suppose, on Wednesday, and shall devote a day to Mr Ramsay at Auchtertyre, near Stirling—a man to whose worth I cannot do justice. My respectful kind compliments to Mrs Cruikshank, and my dear little Jeanie; and if you see Mr Masterton, please remember me to him. I am ever, my dear sir, &c. R. B.

under condemnation. But this does not appear to have been the case, the child having been born in July 1747. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November that year, occur lines

'Occasioned by a reflection lately published on the new-born daughter of Mr Mackenzie, late Earl of Cromertie:—

Ill flows the verse that brands an infant's name,
And loads a babe yet innocent with shame;
Heir to misfortune, let its fate suffice,
Nor for the father's crimes the child despise;
The generous heart laments the guiltless moan,
The future sighs, for follies not its own;
E'en there perhaps we err—succeeding days
May see this child our warmest wishes raise,
Retrieve the honours that her father lost,
And match some Briton, Britain's future boast,
Who, fired, celestial Liberty, by thee,
From hell-born faction shall his country free.—C. B.'

[1] This letter was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1832, without address. Its being addressed to Mr Cruikshank, notwithstanding that Burns in the preceding letter implies the reverse of an intention of writing to him, is evident from the complimentary expressions at the close.

It is probable, from an expression which Mr Walker uses in a letter printed by Currie, that the poet would on this occasion visit also Mr Graham of Balgowan, subsequently Lord Lynedoch, who, with his wife, had offered to conduct him to a spot on their grounds, hallowed in Scottish song—namely, the grave of Bessy Bell and Mary Gray.

Among the hills behind Ochtertyre is a wild vale, partly filled by a lake, which all visitors are taken to see. Here the Muse favoured Burns.

ON SCARING SOME WATER-FOWL IN LOCH TURIT.

Why, ye tenants of the lake,
For me your watery haunt forsake?
Tell me, fellow-creatures, why
At my presence thus you fly?
Why disturb your social joys,
Parent, filial, kindred ties?—
Common friend to you and me,
Nature's gifts to all are free:
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,
Busy feed, or wanton lave;
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,
Bide the surging billow's shock.

Conscious, blushing for our race,
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace.
Man, your proud usurping foe,
Would be lord of all below:
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,
Tyrant stern to all beside.
The eagle, from the cliffy brow,
Marking you his prey below,
In his breast no pity dwells,
Strong necessity compels:
But man, to whom alone is given
A ray direct from pitying Heaven,
Glories in his heart humane—
And creatures for his pleasure slain.
In these savage, liquid plains,
Only known to wandering swains,
Where the mossy riv'let strays,
Far from human haunts and ways,
All on Nature you depend,
And life's poor season peaceful spend.

Or, if man's superior might
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne,
Man with all his powers you scorn;
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn at least to be his slave.

Among the inmates of Ochtertyre House was a young cousin of his host, Miss Euphemia Murray of Lintrose, a beautiful fair creature of eighteen, already distinguished by the *sobriquet* of the 'Flower of Strathmore.' Burns made this demoiselle the subject of a pastoral song, in which he familiarises her name:—

BLITHE WAS SHE.

TUNE—*Andro and his Cutty Gun.*

CHORUS.

Blithe, blithe and merry was she,
Blithe was she butt and ben:
Blithe by the banks of Earn,
And blithe in Glenturit Glen.

By Auchtertyre grows the aik, — oak
On Yarrow banks the birken shaw; — birch-woods
But Phemie was a bonnier lass
Than braes o' Yarrow ever saw.

Her looks were like a flower in May,
Her smile was like a simmer morn;
She trippèd by the banks o' Earn,
As light 's a bird upon a thorn.

Her bonny face it was as meek
As ony lamb upon a lea;
The evening sun was ne'er sae sweet
As was the blink o' Phemie's e'e.

The Highland hills I've wandered wide,
And o'er the lowlands I hae been;
But Phemie was the blithest lass
That ever trod the dewy green.

It was generally thought by the young lady's friends, that the

poet had hit off very happily her peculiar style of beauty in the verse—

> 'Her bonny face it was as meek
> As ony lamb upon a lea.'

She subsequently married Mr Smythe of Methven, one of the judges of the Court of Session.[1]

A lady, still living in Perthshire (1855), and already referred to in these pages, remembers visiting Drummond Castle immediately after Burns had been at Ochtertyre. Captain Drummond, subsequently Lord Perth, had recently obtained possession of this fine place, along with the estates which had been forfeited by his collateral relations in 1745–46. He and his lady, the Honourable Mrs Drummond, were full of loyalty to the reigning family, to which they had been so largely indebted. My informant remembers that some one asked Mrs Drummond why Burns, who had been at various places in the neighbourhood, had not been here; to which the answer was: 'We could not invite him, unless he had disclaimed writing the lines on the inn window.' This shews how seriously that escapade of sentiment was taken up in some quarters, and leads us to imagine that the Stirling lines exercised some influence on their author's fate. One cannot but feel that a reflection on this particular of Burns's history came ill from a Drummond—one sitting in the halls of a century-long line of sufferers for the House of Stuart. More strangely still, Sir William Murray, who had been so friendly towards Burns, represented a family of opposite antecedents. His father had, indeed, attempted in the interest of the government to seize the person of the last Duke of Perth, when he was about to join the fatal standard of the Chevalier.

A letter of Mr Ramsay to Dr Currie, and two letters which he addressed to Burns (October 22), and which Currie has published, give some idea of what passed at the Menteith Ochtertyre, on Burns's way back to Harvieston:—'I have been in the company of many men of genius,' says Mr Ramsay, 'some of them poets, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him—the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire! I never was more delighted, therefore, than with his company for two days

[1] 'Mrs Smythe always manifested a disinclination to speak on the subject of her meeting with Burns. But she once told me that she remembered his reciting the poem on Scaring the Wild-fowl one evening after supper, and that he gave the concluding lines with the greatest possible vigour.'—*Letter of a relation of Mrs Smythe.*

tête-à-tête. In a mixed company, I should have made little of him; for, in the gamester's phrase, he did not always know when to play off and when to play on. . . . . I not only proposed to him the writing of a play similar to the *Gentle Shepherd, qualem decet esse sororem,* but Scottish Georgics, a subject which Thomson has by no means exhausted in his *Seasons.* What beautiful landscapes of rural life and manners might not have been expected from a pencil so faithful and forcible as his, which could have exhibited scenes as familiar and interesting as those in the *Gentle Shepherd,* which every one who knows our swains in their unadulterated state instantly recognises as true to nature! But to have executed either of these plans, steadiness and abstraction from company were wanting, not talents. When I asked him whether the Edinburgh literati had mended his poems by their criticisms—"Sir," said he, "these gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine that it is neither fit for weft nor woof." He said he had not changed a word except one, to please Dr Blair.'[1]

Mr Ramsay had put up a Latin inscription over his door, expressing his wish to live in peace and die in joyful hope in the small but pleasant inheritance of his fathers. With another he graced a *Salictum,* or plantation of willows—

'Hic, procul negotiis strepituque,
Innocuis deliciis
Silvulas inter nascentes reptandi,
Apiumque labores suspiciendi,
Fruor.
Hic, si faxit Deus opt. max.
Prope hunc fontem pellucidum,
Cum quadam juventutis amico superstite,
Sæpe conquiescam, senex,
Contentus modicis, meoque lætus!' &c.

Burns admired the general meaning of these inscriptions, and requested copies of them, and with this request Mr Ramsay complied. The poet made his host aware of his having lately heard some Highland airs, with which he was much charmed, and for which he was writing verses. He had also told Mr Ramsay of the solicitude he felt to gather airs for *Johnson's Museum.* Mr Ramsay therefore furnished him with a letter of introduction to the Rev. W. Young, minister of Erskine, on the Clyde, as a person

[1] This incorrigibility of Burns extended, however, only to his poems printed before he arrived in Edinburgh; for in regard to his unpublished poems, he was amenable to criticism, of which many proofs might be given.—CURRIE.

qualified to introduce him more extensively to Highland music. The sage of the Teith added a transcript of a Highland traditionary story which had made an impression on the poet's mind when narrated in the course of conversation. Its hero was a Highlander named Omeron Cameron, who generously entertained the Earl of Marr in his humble cottage, when that noble had to skulk from his enemies. Being himself forced into exile on this account by his own clan, he went to Kildrummie Castle with his wife and children, to claim a requital from the earl, who had told him to do so if ever misfortune should befall him. Upon hearing who it was, the earl started from his seat with a joyful exclamation, and caused Omeron to be conducted with all possible respect into the hall. He afterwards conferred on him a four-merk land near the castle. Out of these simple elements, Mr Ramsay thought that Burns might compose a play; but it was not for Burns, but the noteless youth whom he had lately met at Dr Adam Ferguson's, to accomplish such feats. There was, however, good sense in a portion of Mr Ramsay's letter. 'I approve of your plan,' said he, 'of retiring from din and dissipation to a farm of very moderate size, sufficient to find exercise for mind and body, but not so great as to absorb better things. And if some intellectual pursuit be well chosen and steadily pursued, it will be more lucrative than most farms in this age of rapid improvement. Upon this subject, as your well-wisher and admirer, permit me to go a step further. Let those bright talents which the Almighty has bestowed upon you, be henceforth employed to the noble purpose of supporting the cause of truth and virtue. An imagination so varied and forcible as yours may do this in many different modes; nor is it necessary to be always serious, which you have been to good purpose; good morals may be recommended in a comedy, or even in a song,' &c.[1]

Burns had conversed with Mr Ramsay regarding an ancient Jacobite lady, a relic of a former generation, and representative of an extinct order of manners, who dwelt at no great distance from Harvieston, and whom it was therefore possible for the bard to visit on this occasion. Mrs Bruce of Clackmannan, or (to use the Scotch title of courtesy) Lady Clackmannan, lived in the ancient and now ruined tower of that name, overlooking the Firth of Forth at Alloa. Allied in blood to the Bruce, and in sentiments to the Stuarts, tall and dignified in her figure even on the borders

[1] See note on *Summer Tours of* 1787, Appendix, No. 12.

of ninety, carrying a ballast of vigorous common sense, along with all the sails and colours of a lively imagination—this admirable old woman, with her tartan scarf and the white rose in her breast—for so her portrait represents her—must have been a fascinating study for Burns. Mr Ramsay seems to have been curious to learn afterwards how the bard regarded her. 'Well,' says he, 'what do you think of good Lady Clackmannan? It is a pity she is so deaf, and speaks so indistinctly. Her house is a specimen of the mansions of our gentry of the last age, when hospitality and elevation of mind were conspicuous amidst plain fare and plain furniture.'

Dr Adair, adverting to the little impression which the Glendevon scenery seemed to make on Burns, says: 'A visit to Mrs Bruce of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings more powerfully. This venerable dame, with characteristical dignity, informed me, on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. Though almost deprived of speech by a paralytic affection, she preserved her hospitality and urbanity. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honour of knighthood, remarking, that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people*. . . . . You will, of course, conclude that the old lady's political tenets were as Jacobitical as the poet's—a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception and entertainment. She gave, as her first toast after dinner, *Awa' Uncos*, or Away with the Strangers. Who these strangers were, you will readily understand. Mrs Adair corrects me by saying it should be *Hooi* or *Hooi Uncos;* a sound used by shepherds to direct their dogs to drive away the sheep.'

It is barely necessary to remark, that Lady Clackmannan scarcely had authentic grounds for concluding that Robert Bruce was sprung from *her* family; for all that the Bruces of Stirling and Clackmannanshires know of their earliest recorded ancestor is, that David II., the son of Bruce, addresses him in a charter as 'our relative.' The old lady probably grounded upon some family legend. She died in 1791, when the sword and helmet of the hero of Bannockburn fell appropriately into the hands of her kinsman, the Earl of Elgin, in whose mansion of Broomhall they are still preserved. Most Scotsmen will feel that the sword of Robert Bruce

has not lost any portion of historical interest from its having given the *accolade* to Robert Burns.

Dr Adair states, that he and Burns returned to Edinburgh by Kinross and Queensferry. The reason for their circuit by Kinross would, of course, be Burns's interest in the melancholy tale of Queen Mary. He would, doubtless, view with emotion the little islet-fortress of Lochleven, in which she first learned to endure the fate of a prisoner, and where, under the compulsion of armed and ferocious barons, she signed a surrender of the kingdom to her son. 'At Dunfermline,' says Dr Adair, 'we visited the ruined Abbey, and the Abbey Church, now consecrated to Presbyterian worship. Here I mounted the *cutty-stool*, or stool of repentance, assuming the character of a penitent for fornication; while Burns from the pulpit addressed to me a ludicrous reproof and exhortation, parodied from that which had been delivered to himself in Ayrshire, where he had, as he assured me, once been one of seven[1] who mounted the *seat of shame* together.

'In the church-yard, two broad flagstones marked the grave of Robert Bruce, for whose memory Burns had more than common veneration. He knelt and kissed the stone with sacred fervour, and heartily (*suus ut mos erat*) execrated the worse than Gothic neglect of the first of Scottish heroes.'[2]

'The surprise,' says Dr Currie, 'expressed by Dr Adair in his excellent letter, that the romantic scenery of the Devon should have failed to call forth any exertion of the poet's Muse, is not in its nature singular; and the disappointment felt at his not expressing in more glowing language his emotions on the sight of the famous cataract of that river, is similar to what was felt by the friends of Burns on other occasions of the same nature. Yet the inference which Dr Adair seems inclined to draw from it—that he had little taste for the picturesque—might be questioned, even if it stood uncontroverted by other evidence. [Josiah Walker reports very differently of Burns's feelings on his being introduced to the fine Highland scenery of Blair.] The Muse of Burns was in a high degree capricious; she came uncalled, and often refused

[1] The session-book of Mauchline says five only.

[2] Dr Adair married Charlotte Hamilton two years after, and settling as a physician in Harrowgate, he died there in 1802. The beautiful Charlotte fell into bad health, and went to a premature grave in 1806. She had previously, in an evil hour, as Cromek justly calls it, burned a considerable number of letters which Burns had addressed to Miss Chalmers. I am happy to acknowledge the benefits conferred on this work by Dr Adair's son, Major Adair, secretary of the Scottish Hospital, London.

to attend at his bidding. Of all the numerous subjects suggested to him by his friends and correspondents, there is scarcely one that he adopted. The very expectation that a particular occasion would excite the energies of fancy, if communicated to Burns, seemed, in him, as in other poets, destructive of the effect expected. Hence perhaps may be explained why the banks of the Devon and of the Tweed form no part of the subjects of his song.'

In these remarks, and others in which he follows out the same train of reasoning, Dr Currie seems to speak truly as far as he goes. Burns was undoubtedly susceptible of all those pleasures from the sight of fine scenery which Mr Walker ascribes to him: but it is easy to imagine that he was not certain to be always in a mood for expressing these feelings before company, especially if all were voluble in their admiration;[1] neither was it to be expected that he should be ready to pen metrical raptures about every fine cascade to which he was introduced, however much he might in his heart admire it. He did, on various occasions, throughout his late tours, pour forth eloquent stanzas on natural objects which met his eyes; but his Muse was the more apt to take wing in a Glen Turit, where the scaring of the wild-fowl touched his profound and beautiful sympathies with the lower animals, or when the 'meek loveliness' of a Phemie Murray awakened his adoration of female charms. Even the association of some old song about a particular place affected him more than the utmost amount of physical beauty which might belong to it. His genius was more for humanity and its belongings, than for the insensitive part of creation.

Burns returned to Edinburgh on the 20th October, ill with a cold caught in his journey. He had now to bethink himself of his long-promised ride to Dumfriesshire, and he immediately addressed Mr Miller on that subject. The letter, hitherto inedited, is of importance as shewing the views of the writer regarding the farming-life which he contemplated. These views,

[1] 'He disliked to be tutored in matters of taste, and could not endure that one should run shouting before him whenever any fine object appeared. On one occasion of this kind, a lady at the poet's side said: "Burns, have you nothing to say of this?" "Nothing, madam," he replied, glancing at the leader of the party, "for an ass is braying over it." .... When he visited Crechope Linn, in Dumfriesshire, at every turn of the stream and bend of the wood he was loudly called upon to admire the shelving sinuosities of the burn, and the caverned splendour of its all but inaccessible banks. It was thought by those with him that he did not shew rapture enough. "I could not admire it more, sir," said the poet, "if He who made it were to ask me to do it."'—*Cunningham's Life of Burns.*

it will be observed, were as moderate and prudential as could have been entertained by the veriest son of prose in existence.

TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ., DALSWINTON.

EDINBURGH, 20*th October* 1787.

SIR—I was spending a few days at Sir William Murray's, Oughtertyre, and did not get your obliging letter till to-day I came to town. I was still more unlucky in catching a miserable cold, for which the medical gentlemen have ordered me into close confinement, 'under pain of death'—the severest of penalties. In two or three days, if I get better, and if I hear at your lodgings that you are still at Dalswinton, I will take a ride to Dumfries directly. From something in your last, I would wish to explain my idea of being your tenant. I want to be a farmer in a small farm, about a plough-gang, in a pleasant country, under the auspices of a good landlord. I have no foolish notion of being a tenant on easier terms than another. To find a farm where one can live at all is not easy—I only mean living soberly, like an old-style farmer, and joining personal industry. The banks of the Nith are as sweet poetic ground as any I ever saw; and besides, sir, 'tis but justice to the feelings of my own heart, and the opinion of my best friends, to say that I would wish to call you landlord sooner than any landed gentleman I know. These are my views and wishes; and in whatever way you think best to lay out your farms, I shall be happy to rent one of them. I shall certainly be able to ride to Dalswinton about the middle of next week, if I hear you are not gone. I have the honour to be, sir, your obliged, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.[1]

On returning from the north, Burns appears to have taken up his quarters with Mr William Cruikshank, a colleague of Nicol in the High School. The house was composed of the two upper floors of a lofty building, in an airy situation in the New Town—then marked No. 2, now 30, St James's Square. The poet's room had a window overlooking the green behind the Register House, as well as the street entering the Square. It was by far the most agreeable place in which he had ever had more than the most temporary lodging. We are told by the historian of the High School, that Mr Cruikshank was regarded as a person of no mean acquirements.[2] He had a daughter, Janet, a young girl of budding loveliness, and much promise as a pianist. To her the poet was indebted for many pleasant hours, in listening to his favourite Scottish airs. He also employed her voice and instrument in

[1] From the original, in possession of Mr W. C. Aitken, Birmingham.

[2] Mr Cruikshank died in 1795.

enabling him to adapt new verses to old airs for the *Scots Musical Museum*. Dr Walker says: 'About the end of October, I called for him at the house of a friend [Mr Cruikshank], whose daughter, though not more than twelve, was a considerable proficient in music. I found him seated by the harpsichord of this young lady, listening with the keenest interest to his own verses, which she sung and accompanied, and adjusting them to the music by repeated trials of the effect. In this occupation he was so totally absorbed, that it was difficult to draw his attention from it for a moment.'[1] This gives us some idea of the care and study which Burns bestowed upon his songs, in order to give them that perfect adaptation to their respective airs for which they are remarkable. He gratefully celebrated his favourite, little Miss Jenny Cruikshank, in a song remarkable for involvement of images, but singular grace and delicacy of expression.

THE ROSE-BUD.

TUNE—*The Shepherd's Wife.*

A rose-bud by my early walk,
Adown a corn-enclosèd bawk,[2]
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,
All on a dewy morning.
Ere twice the shades o' dawn are fled,
In a' its crimson glory spread,
And drooping rich the dewy head,
It scents the early morning.

Within the bush, her covert nest,
A little linnet fondly prest,
The dew sat chilly on her breast
Sae early in the morning.
She soon shall see her tender brood,
The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
Amang the fresh green leaves bedewed,
Awake the early morning.

So thou, dear bird, young Jenny fair!
On trembling string or vocal air,
Shall sweetly pay the tender care
That tents thy early morning. guards
So thou, sweet Rose-bud, young and gay,
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
And bless the parent's evening ray
That watched thy early morning.

[1] *Walker's Life of Burns*, p. lxxxi.

[2] An open space in a cornfield, generally a ridge left untilled.

Nor was this the only proof of the esteem in which Burns held his Rose-bud :—

TO MISS CRUIKSHANK, A VERY YOUNG LADY,

WRITTEN ON THE BLANK-LEAF OF A BOOK PRESENTED TO HER BY THE AUTHOR.

Beauteous Rose-bud, young and gay,
Blooming in thy early May,
Never mayst thou, lovely flower,
Chilly shrink in sleety shower;
Never Boreas' hoary path,
Never Eurus' poisonous breath,
Never baleful stellar lights,
Taint thee with untimely blights!
Never, never reptile thief
Riot on thy virgin leaf!
Nor even Sol too fiercely view
Thy bosom blushing still with dew!

Mayst thou long, sweet crimson gem,
Richly deck thy native stem:
'Till some evening, sober, calm,
Dropping dews and breathing balm,
While all around the woodland rings,
And every bird thy requiem sings;
Thou, amid the dirgeful sound,
Shed thy dying honours round,
And resign to parent earth
The loveliest form she e'er gave birth.

The *Rose-bud* became the wife of Mr Henderson, a legal practitioner at Jedburgh, and has been for some years dead. A lady, who stands towards her in the relation of daughter-in-law, has been so good as to inform me of a beautiful oil-painting in the possession of Mrs Henderson's only surviving son, which 'justifies the appellation of the *Rose-bud*, as, judging from the Hebe-like appearance of the picture, she must have been a strikingly beautiful girl.' The same lady possesses 'a china bowl which, according to the family tradition, was broken by Burns in one of his merry nights at St James's Square.'

The zeal of Burns for the collection, illustration, and extension of the body of Scottish song, was at this season a conspicuous feeling in his bosom. He entered into the views of Johnson with an industry and earnestness which despised all money considerations, and which money could not have purchased. The character

of our bard is seen strongly here. He adored his native Muse, and held the codex of her effusions as a sacred volume. He was also wholly above the idea of mercenary verse. Numbers he gave forth, 'for the numbers came.' Though he had published a volume of these, and consented to realise a profit by it, he had no idea of composing either poems or songs with a view to a pecuniary recompense for them. Above all, he was incapable of writing a *song* directly for money. There may have been something of over-fastidiousness in this feeling of Burns; and yet it was, on the whole, in high consonance with the poetical character which he bore. It is at least a more tolerable error than the opposite one of an over-keen solicitude respecting the profits of the pen, which may now be said occasionally to present itself somewhat too obtrusively in the literary world.

At Gordon Castle, Burns had formed an acquaintance with a Mr James Hoy, ostensibly librarian to the Duke, but rather a kind of humble companion; a sensible, learned person, who is described as having lived in that princely mansion for forty-six years (previous to his death in 1828) without ever losing the Dominie-Sampson-like purity of heart and simplicity of manners by which he was distinguished. To him Burns now addressed himself for an object connected with Johnson's design of the Museum. The Duke, under an unpretending exterior, possessed a certain dash of song-writing genius, which had produced at least one popular effusion. This ditty, bearing the title of *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen,* Burns wished to secure.

TO MR JAMES HOY, GORDON CASTLE.

EDINBURGH, *20th October* 1787.

SIR—I will defend my conduct in giving you this trouble, on the best of Christian principles—'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.' I shall certainly, among my legacies, leave my latest curse to that unlucky predicament which hurried—tore me away from Castle Gordon. May that obstinate son of Latin prose [Nicol] be curst to Scotch-mile periods, and damned to seven-league paragraphs; while Declension and Conjugation, Gender, Number, and Tense, under the ragged banners of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile array!

Allow me, sir, to strengthen the small claim I have to your acquaintance by the following request:—An engraver, James Johnson, in Edinburgh, has, not from mercenary views, but from an honest Scotch enthusiasm, set about collecting all our native songs, and

setting them to music, particularly those that have never been set before. Clarke, the well-known musician, presides over the musical arrangement; and Drs Beattie and Blacklock, Mr Tytler of Woodhouselee, and your humble servant to the utmost of his small power, assist in collecting the old poetry, or sometimes, for a fine air, make a stanza when it has no words. The brats, too tedious to mention, claim a parental pang from my bardship. I suppose it will appear in Johnson's second number—the first was published before my acquaintance with him. My request is—*Cauld Kail in Aberdeen* is one intended for this number, and I beg a copy of his Grace of Gordon's words to it, which you were so kind as to repeat to me. You may be sure we won't prefix the author's name, except you like; though I look on it as no small merit to this work, that the names of so many of the authors of our old Scotch songs—names almost forgotten—will be inserted. I do not well know where to write to you—I rather write at you; but if you will be so obliging immediately on receipt of this as to write me a few lines, I shall perhaps pay you in kind, though not in quality. Johnson's terms are: Each number a handsome pocket volume, to consist at least of a hundred Scotch songs, with basses for the harpsichord, &c. The price to subscribers, 5s.: to non-subscribers, 6s. He will have three numbers, I conjecture.

My direction for two or three weeks will be at Mr William Cruikshank's, St James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh. I am, sir, yours to command, R. B.

To this, Hoy answered in the course of a few days—

GORDON CASTLE, 31*st October* 1787.

SIR—If you were not sensible of your fault, as well as of your loss, in leaving this place so suddenly, I should condemn you to starve upon *cauld kail*[1] for *ae towmont*[2] at least; and as for *Dick Latine*,[3] your travelling-companion, without banning him wi' a' the curses contained in your letter (which he 'll no value a bawbee), I should give him nought but *Stra'bogie castocks*[4] to chew for *sax ouks*, or ay until he was as sensible of his error as you seem to be of yours. . . . . .

Your song I shewed without producing the author; and it was judged by the Duchess to be the production of Dr Beattie. I sent a copy of it, by her Grace's desire, to a Mrs M'Pherson, in Badenoch, who sings *Morag*, and all other Gaelic songs, in great perfection. I have recorded it likewise, by Lady Charlotte's desire, in a book belonging to her ladyship; where it is in company with a great many other poems and verses, some of the writers of which are no less eminent for their political than for their poetical abilities. When

[1] Cold mutton-broth. [2] A twelvemonth. [3] Mr Nicol.

[4] The song speaks of castocks (cabbage-stems) in Strathbogie.

the Duchess was informed that you were the author, she wished you and [illegible] the verses in Scotch.

Any letter directed to me here will come to hand safely, and if sent under the Duke's cover, it will likewise come free—that is, as long as the Duke is in this country. I am, sir, yours sincerely.

Burns's reply was as follows:—

TO MR JAMES HOY, GORDON CASTLE.

EDINBURGH, 6th November 1787.

DEAR SIR—I would have wrote you immediately on receipt of your kind letter; but a mixed impulse of gratitude and esteem whispered to me that I ought to send you something by way of return. When a poet owes anything, particularly when he is indebted for good offices, the payment that usually recurs to him—the only coin, indeed, in which he is probably conversant—is rhyme. Johnson sends the books by the fly, as directed, and begs me to enclose his most grateful thanks: my return I intended should have been one or two poetic bagatelles which the world have not seen, or, perhaps, for obvious reasons, cannot see. These I shall send you before I leave Edinburgh. They may make you laugh a little, which, on the whole, is no bad way of spending one's precious hours and still more precious breath: at anyrate, they will be, though a small, yet a very sincere mark of my respectful esteem for a gentleman whose further acquaintance I should look upon as a peculiar obligation.

The Duke's song, independent totally of his dukeship, charms me. There is I know not what of wild happiness of thought and expression peculiarly beautiful in the old Scottish song style, of which his Grace, old venerable Skinner, the author of *Tullochgorum*, &c., and the late Ross at Lochlee, of true Scottish poetic memory, are the only modern instances that I recollect, since Ramsay, with his contemporaries, and poor Bob Fergusson, went to the world of deathless existence and truly immortal song. The mob of mankind, that many-headed beast, would laugh at so serious a speech about an old song; but as Job says, 'Oh that mine adversary had written a book!' Those who think that composing a Scotch song is a trifling business, let them try.

I wish my Lord Duke would pay a proper attention to the Christian admonition 'Hide not your candle under a bushel,' but 'let your light shine before men.' I could name half-a-dozen dukes that I guess are a devilish deal worse employed: nay, I question if there are half a dozen better: perhaps there are not half that scanty number whom Heaven has favoured with the rueful, happy, and I will say glorious gift. I am, dear sir, your obliged humble servant

R. B.

Several years had elapsed since Burns had had any correspondence with his preceptor Murdoch, now pursuing his profession in London. The poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman had been subject of fame for months both in Edinburgh and London, ere the worthy man was quite sure that that phenomenon was no other than the clouterly boy who had learned so much French with him in a fortnight, about a dozen years before. He now addressed Burns—

LONDON, 28*th October* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—As my friend, Mr Brown, is going from this place to your neighbourhood, I embrace the opportunity of telling you that I am yet alive, tolerably well, and always in expectation of being better. By the much-valued letters before me, I see that it was my duty to have given you this intelligence about three years and nine months ago; and have nothing to allege as an excuse, but that we poor, busy, bustling bodies in London are so much taken up with the various pursuits in which we are here engaged, that we seldom think of any person, creature, place, or thing, that is absent. But this is not altogether the case with me; for I often think of you, and *Hornie*, and *Russell*, and an *unfathomed depth*, and *lowan brunstane*, all in the same minute, although you and they are (as I suppose) at a considerable distance. I flatter myself, however, with the pleasing thought that you and I shall meet some time or other, either in Scotland or England. If ever you come hither, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your poems relished by the Caledonians in London full as much as they can be by those of Edinburgh. We frequently repeat some of your verses in our Caledonian Society; and you may believe that I am not a little vain that I have had some share in cultivating such a genius. I was not absolutely certain that you were the author till a few days ago, when I made a visit to Mrs Hill, Dr M'Comb's eldest daughter, who lives in town, and who told me that she was informed of it by a letter from her sister in Edinburgh, with whom you had been in company when in that capital.

Pray let me know if you have any intention of visiting this huge, overgrown metropolis. It would afford matter for a large poem. Here you would have an opportunity of indulging your vein in the study of mankind, perhaps to a greater degree than in any city upon the face of the globe; for the inhabitants of London, as you know, are a collection of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, who make it, as it were, the centre of their commerce. . . . .

Present my respectful compliments to Mrs Burns, to my dear friend Gilbert, and all the rest of her amiable children. May the Father of the Universe bless you all with those principles and dispositions that the best of parents took such uncommon pains to instil into your minds from your earliest infancy! May you live as he

did! If you do, you can never be unhappy. I feel myself grown serious all at once, and affected in a manner I cannot describe. I shall only add, that it is one of the greatest pleasures I promise myself before I die, that of seeing the family of a man whose memory I revere more than that of any person that ever I was acquainted with. I am, my dear friend, yours sincerely,

JOHN MURDOCH.

Having received an answer from Miss Charlotte Hamilton and Miss Chalmers to some one of his late epistles, he replied as follows:—

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 21, 1787.

I have one vexatious fault to the kindly welcome, well-filled sheet which I owe to your and Charlotte's goodness—it contains too much sense, sentiment, and good spelling. It is impossible that even you two, whom I declare to my God I will give credit for any degree of excellence the sex are capable of attaining—it is impossible you can go on to correspond at that rate; so, like those who, Shenstone says, retire because they have made a good speech, I shall after a few letters hear no more of you. I insist that you shall write whatever comes first: what you see, what you read, what you hear, what you admire, what you dislike, trifles, bagatelles, nonsense: or to fill up a corner, e'en put down a laugh at full length. Now, none of your polite hints about flattery; I leave that to your lovers, if you have or shall have any; though, thank Heaven, I have found at last two girls who can be luxuriantly happy in their own minds and with one another, without that commonly necessary appendage to female bliss —A LOVER.

Charlotte and you are just two favourite resting-places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world. God knows, I am ill fitted for the struggle; I glory in being a poet, and I want to be thought a wise man—I would fondly be generous, and I wish to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. 'Some folk hae a hantle o' fauts, but I 'm but a ne'er-do-weel.'

Afternoon.—To close the melancholy reflections at the end of last sheet, I shall just add a piece of devotion, commonly known in Carrick by the title of the *Wabster's Grace*:—

'Some say we 're thieves, and e'en sae are we!
Some say we lie, and e'en sae do we!
Gude forgie us, and I hope sae will he!
——Up and to your looms, lads!'

R. B.

He was now in the full career of friendship for Margaret Chalmers and Charlotte Hamilton. The latter, as we have seen,

was a lovely woman. Of the personal attractions of Miss Chalmers, it could at the utmost be said, as Burns did say, that they were above the medium. She was, however, a woman of spirit, talent, and boundless love of things literary. Burns delighted in the society of the two young ladies, and wrote to Miss Chalmers in particular many letters affecting the tone of friendship, but ever liable to verge towards that of gallantry. At the present time, he was pleased to celebrate Miss Chalmers's attractions in two songs, which he designed to publish in Johnson's second volume.

BRAVING ANGRY WINTER'S STORMS.

TUNE—*Neil Gow's Lamentation for Abercairny.*

Where, braving angry winter's storms,
  The lofty Ochils rise,
Far in their shade my Peggy's charms
  First blest my wondering eyes;
As one who by some savage stream,
  A lonely gem surveys,
Astonished, doubly marks its beam,
  With art's most polished blaze.

Blest be the wild, sequestered shade,
  And blest the day and hour,
Where Peggy's charms I first surveyed—
  When first I felt their power!
The tyrant Death, with grim control,
  May seize my fleeting breath;
But tearing Peggy from my soul
  Must be a stronger death.

MY PEGGY'S FACE.

TUNE—*My Peggy's Face.*

My Peggy's face, my Peggy's form,
The frost of hermit age might warm;
My Peggy's worth, my Peggy's mind,
Might charm the first of human kind.
I love my Peggy's angel air,
Her face so truly, heavenly fair,
Her native grace so void of art,
But I adore my Peggy's heart.

The lily's hue, the rose's dye,
The kindling lustre of an eye;
Who but owns their magic sway!
Who but knows they all decay;
The tender thrill, the pitying tear,
The generous purpose, nobly dear,
The gentle look, that rage disarms—
These are all immortal charms.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

My dear Madam—I just now have read yours. The poetic compliments I pay cannot be misunderstood. They are neither of them so particular as to point you out to the world at large; and the circle of your acquaintances will allow all I have said. Besides, I have complimented you chiefly, almost solely, on your mental charms. Shall I be plain with you? I will; so look to it. Personal attractions, madam, you have much above par—wit, understanding, and worth, you possess in the first class. This is a cursed flat way of telling you these truths, but let me hear no more of your sheepish timidity. I know the world a little. I know what they will say of my poems—by second-sight, I suppose—for I am seldom out in my conjectures; and you may believe me, my dear madam, I would not run any risk of hurting you by any ill-judged compliment. I wish to shew to the world the odds between a poet's friends and those of simple prosemen. More for your information—both the pieces go in. One of them—*Where Braving Angry Winter's Storms*, is already set—the tune is Neil Gow's *Lamentation for Abercairny*; the other is to be set to an old Highland air in Daniel Dow's collection of ancient Scots music; the name is *Ha a Chaillich air mo Dheith*. My treacherous memory has forgot every circumstance about *Les Incas*; only I think you mentioned them as being in Creech's possession. I shall ask him about it. I am afraid the song of *Somebody* will come too late—as I shall for certain leave town in a week for Ayrshire, and from that to Dumfries; but there my hopes are slender. I leave my direction in town; so anything, wherever I am, will reach me.

I saw yours to ——; it is not too severe, nor did he take it amiss. On the contrary, like a whipt spaniel, he talks of being with you in the Christmas-days. Mr —— has given him the invitation, and he is determined to accept of it. Oh selfishness! he owns, in his sober moments, that from his own volatility of inclination, the circumstances in which he is situated, and his knowledge of his father's disposition, the whole affair is chimerical—yet he *will* gratify an idle *penchant* at the enormous, cruel expense, of perhaps ruining the peace of the very woman for whom he professes the generous passion of love! He is a gentleman in his mind and manners—*tant pis!*

He is a volatile school-boy—the heir of a man's fortune who well knows the value of two-times two!

Perdition seize them and their fortunes before they should make the amiable, the lovely ——, the derided object of their purse-proud contempt!

I am doubly happy to hear of Mrs ——'s recovery, because I really thought all was over with her. There are days of pleasure yet awaiting her:

'As I came in by Glenap,
I met with an aged woman;
She bade me cheer up my heart,
For the best o' my days was comin'.'[1]

This day will decide my affairs with Creech. Things are, like myself, not what they ought to be; yet better than what they appear to be.

'Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings but himself—
That hideous sight—a naked human heart.'

Farewell! remember me to Charlotte. R. B.

The character of Margaret Chalmers may be said to stand as a testimony in favour of that of Burns. Without a certain natural refinement of soul, it was impossible that he could have induced such a woman to grant him her friendship. His letters to her have a tone of deference which mere rank could not extort from Burns: it was purely an homage to her personal excellences. The relative already quoted says of Miss Chalmers: 'In early life, when her hazel eyes were large and bright, and her teeth white and regular, her face must have had a charm not always the result or the accompaniment of fine features. She was little; but her figure must have been perfect. . . . . Her conversation was cheerful and intelligent. She rarely talked of books, yet greatly liked reading. She spoke readily and well, but preferred listening to others. In short, the character given by M. de Grignan of Madame de Sévigné, in a letter announcing her death, would give a more exact idea of Margaret Chalmers than anything I can write. As with Madame de Sévigné, her religion not only supported her under affliction, but guided her whole conduct. She judged correctly of light literature; yet her general reading was serious and instructive. Her heart was warm, her temper even, and her conversation lively. I have often been told that her gentleness and vivacity had a favourable influence on the manner of Burns, and that he appeared to advantage in her presence.'

[1] This is an old popular rhyme. Glenap is in the south of Ayrshire.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

EDINBURGH, *Sunday Morning, Nov.* 23, 1787.[1]

I beg, my dear sir, you would not make any appointment to take us to Mr Ainslie's to-night. On looking over my engagements, constitution, present state of my health, some little vexatious soul concerns, &c., I find I can't sup abroad to-night. I shall be in to-day till one o'clock, if you have a leisure hour.

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence. You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of blue-devilism, and you laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my good things. I don't know, upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God's world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now, in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may perhaps sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be your friend, R. B.

Mr Ainslie at this time had a lodging on the north side of the same square, so that the two friends were very ready to each other's call. The young writer, as has been already mentioned, retained to the close of life a most kindly recollection of Burns, and the many pleasant hours they had spent together. He used to relate an anecdote, by way of proving that Burns was no Bacchanalian by his own choice. Though but an apprentice, he had already a cellar—certainly, however, not an extensive one, as it consisted simply of the recess under a *bunker seat* in one of the windows of his apartment; an arrangement long ago common in Scotland, but now only seen in old-fashioned houses. His stock of wine consisted of five bottles of port, all that remained of a dozen of excellent quality which he had got from a wine-merchant who held him in favour. On Burns calling for him one day, Ainslie proposed that they should spend the afternoon over a bottle; but Burns said: 'No, my friend, we'll have no wine to-day—to sit dozing in the house on such a fine afternoon as this would be insufferable. Besides, you know that you and I don't require wine to sharpen our wit, nor its adventitious aid to make us happy. No; we'll take a ramble over Arthur's Seat, to admire the beauties of nature, and come in to a late tea.' The two friends adopted this plan; and Mr Ainslie used to declare, that he had never known the poet's conversation so amusing, so instructive, and altogether delightful, as during the

[1] This date must be in some respect wrong, as the 23d November 1787 was a Friday.

cheerful stroll they had over the hill, and during the sober tea-drinking which followed.

At this time, an artist named Miers was practising in Edinburgh as a maker of silhouette portraits, which he professed to execute at a two minutes' sitting.[1] Their felicity as likenesses, and their cheapness, had brought many sitters, and among the rest Burns, who was glad of an opportunity of obtaining portraits of himself which he could distribute among his intimate friends. Having, in the course of his exertions for *Johnson's Museum*, formed the acquaintance of Mr William Tytler of Woodhouselee, he sent him one of Miers's portraits, along with the following Jacobitical verses :—

ADDRESS TO MR WILLIAM TYTLER.

Revered defender of beauteous Stuart,[2]
  Of Stuart, a name once respected—
A name which to love was the mark of a true heart,
  But now 'tis despised and neglected.

Though something like moisture conglobes in my eye,
  Let no one misdeem me disloyal;
A poor friendless wanderer may well claim a sigh,
  Still more, if that wanderer were royal.

My fathers that name have revered on a throne;
  My fathers have fallen to right it;
Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,
  That name should he scoffingly slight it.

Still in prayers for King George I most heartily join,
  The Queen, and the rest of the gentry;
Be they wise, be they foolish, is nothing of mine,
  Their title 's avowed by my country.

But why of that epocha make such a fuss,
  That gave us the Hanover stem;
If bringing them over was lucky for us,
  I 'm sure 'twas as lucky for them.

But loyalty, truce! we 're on dangerous ground,
  Who knows how the fashions may alter?
The doctrine to-day that is loyalty sound,
  To-morrow may bring us a halter!

[1] They cost in frames from 6s. to 10s. 6d.—*Newspaper advertisement.*

[2] Mr Tytler had published, in 1759, *An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence against Mary Queen of Scots.*

I send you a trifle, a head of a bard,
  A trifle scarce worthy your care;
But accept it, good sir, as a mark of regard,
  Sincere as a saint's dying prayer.

Now life's chilly evening dim shades on your eye,
  And ushers the long dreary night;
But you, like the star that athwart gilds the sky,
  Your course to the latest is bright.

My Muse [he adds in prose] jilted me here, and turned a corner on me, and I have not got again into her good graces. Do me the justice to believe me sincere in my grateful remembrance of the many civilities you have honoured me with since I came to Edinburgh, and in assuring you that I have the honour to be, revered sir, your obliged, and very humble servant, R. B.

There is an obscurity about the date of Burns's second visit to Dalswinton, and it is doubtful if he visited Ayrshire on that occasion, though probability is in favour of the affirmative. The excursion to Dumfriesshire, and the considerations connected with it, are alluded to in a dateless letter

TO MISS CHALMERS.

I have been at Dumfries, and at one visit more shall be decided about a farm in that county. I am rather hopeless in it; but as my brother is an excellent farmer, and is, besides, an exceedingly prudent sober man (qualities which are only a younger brother's fortune in our family), I am determined, if my Dumfries business fail me, to remove into partnership with him, and at our leisure take another farm in the neighbourhood.

I assure you I look for high compliments from you and Charlotte on this very sage instance of my unfathomable, incomprehensible wisdom. Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment now completed. The air is admirable—true old Highland. It was the tune of a Gaelic song which an Inverness lady sang me when I was there; I was so charmed with it, that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing, for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first-rate, though I am convinced it is very well; and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies—it is not only sincere, but just. R. B.

The air here alluded to is a beautiful Highland one, well known

in connection with a song of Allaster Macdonald's, entitled *Bhanarach dhonn a chruidh*, or the *Pretty Milkmaid*. The song written to it by Burns is somewhat singular as a compliment to a handsome woman, in which he did not assume the character of a lover:—

ON A YOUNG LADY RESIDING ON THE BANKS OF THE SMALL RIVER DEVON, IN CLACKMANNANSHIRE, BUT WHOSE INFANT YEARS WERE SPENT IN AYRSHIRE.

How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon,
With green-spreading bushes, and flowers blooming fair;
But the bonniest flower on the banks of the Devon
Was once a sweet bud on the braes of the Ayr.

Mild be the sun on this sweet blushing flower,
In the gay rosy morn as it bathes in the dew!
And gentle the fall of the soft vernal shower,
That steals on the evening each leaf to renew.

Oh spare the dear blossom, ye orient breezes,
With chill hoary wing as ye usher the dawn!
And far be thou distant, thou reptile that seizes
The verdure and pride of the garden and lawn!

Let Bourbon exult in his gay-gilded lilies,
And England triumphant display her proud rose;
A fairer than either adorns the green valleys
Where Devon, sweet Devon, meandering flows.

TO MR GAVIN HAMILTON.

[EDINBURGH, *December* 1787.]

My DEAR SIR—It is indeed with the highest pleasure that I congratulate you on the return of days of ease and nights of pleasure, after the horrid hours of misery in which I saw you suffering existence when last in Ayrshire. I seldom pray for anybody—'I'm baith dead-sweer and wretched ill o't;' but most fervently do I beseech the Power that directs the world, that you may live long and be happy, but live no longer than you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverent care of your health. I know you will make it a point never at one time to drink more than a pint of wine (I mean an English pint), and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time, and that cold drams you will never more taste; and above all things, I am convinced, that, after drinking perhaps boiling punch, you will never mount your horse and gallop home in a chill late hour.

Above all things, as I understand you are in the habits of intimacy with that Boanerges of gospel powers, Father Auld, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising, the carnal moral works of charity, humanity, generosity, and forgiveness of things, which you practised so flagrantly, that it was evident you delighted in them, neglecting, or perhaps profanely despising, the wholesome doctrine of faith without works, the only [means] of salvation. A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion, be highly becoming from you at present; and in my zeal for your wellbeing, I earnestly press on you to be diligent in chanting over the two enclosed pieces of sacred poesy. My best compliments to Mrs Hamilton and Miss Kennedy. Yours, &c. R. B.

It is not difficult for one who has seen aught of the unpublished manuscripts of Burns, to imagine what sort of compositions he refers to as 'pieces of sacred poesy.'

TO MISS MABANE.[1]

Saturday Noon, No. 2 St James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh.

Here have I sat, my dear madam, in the stony attitude of perplexed study for fifteen vexatious minutes, my head askew, bending over the intended card; my fixed eye insensible to the very light of day poured around; my pendulous goose-feather, loaded with ink, hanging over the future letter, all for the important purpose of writing a complimentary card to accompany your trinket.

Compliment is such a miserable Greenland expression, lies at such a chilly polar distance from the torrid zone of my constitution, that I cannot, for the very soul of me, use it to any person for whom I have the twentieth part of the esteem every one must have for you who knows you.

As I leave town in three or four days, I can give myself the pleasure of calling on you only for a minute. Tuesday evening, some time about seven or after, I shall wait on you for your farewell commands.

The hinge of your box I put into the hands of the proper connoisseur. The broken glass likewise went under review; but deliberative wisdom thought it would too much endanger the whole fabric. I am, dear madam, with all sincerity of enthusiasm, your very obedient servant, R. B.

[1] This lady became Mrs Colonel Wright, and died in Edinburgh many years ago. The original of the letter is in the possession of Mr J. R. Forrest, upholsterer, Edinburgh.

TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD.

[EDINBURGH, *December* 1787.]

SIR—Mr Mackenzie, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend,[1] has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, sir, in one or two instances, been patronised by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by * * * * *, friends to them, and honoured acquaintances to me; but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested himself for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to inquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of the needy, sharping author, fastening on those in upper life who honour him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed, the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as may in some measure palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means, a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn, but I believe a careless, indolent attention to economy is almost inseparable from it; then there must be in the heart of every bard of Nature's making a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, that will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune which frequently light on hardy impudence and foot-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank Heaven my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one who pretended in the least to the manners of the gentleman, should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am, and so unhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude, I thank you, sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim,

[1] This excellent man afterwards practised for many years as a surgeon in Irvine. After having attained the highest honours of the magistracy in that burgh, he retired in 1827 to Edinburgh, where he died, January 11, 1837, at an advanced age. It will be recollected that Burns was introduced by Mr Mackenzie to the notice of Mr Dugald Stewart.

caprice, and passion; but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest, warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever calumny aim the poisoned shaft at them, may friendship be by to ward the blow! R. B.

This is an interesting and valuable letter, as shewing the sense which Burns had of his situation at the present crisis. He saw already the false position in which an unendowed man of genius stands in the worldly scene, if he will not or cannot condescend to some ordinary gainful employment. He rejoiced that the labours of the plough stood between him and dependence or want. We find here, too, that calumny had been busy with the name of the poet, pointing particularly to his assumed religious deficiencies, and apparently condemning him also on the score of probity. With the same warmth which caused him scornfully to repel reproach, we see him pour forth his gratitude to his defender.

Burns had returned to Edinburgh after his summer visit to Ayrshire, mainly that he might obtain a settlement of accounts with Mr Creech. The autumn had worn into winter, and still this consummation so devoutly to be wished appeared as remote as ever. It was a great inconvenience, and even misfortune to the poet, to be thus held in idle suspense; for meanwhile he was at once spending his means, relaxing the spring of industrious occupation, and exposing himself to the depraving influences of an over-gay society. Burns, we know, felt at the time great indignation at the delays of Creech, and would not now have written to him in the same strain as from Selkirk in the preceding May.

There is a great want of clear light as to the commercial relations of Burns with his publisher. One thing is notorious respecting Mr Creech—that he never settled an account till it had become a kind of impossibility to withstand the energy of the creditor. He was one of those men whose *foible* it is to pay most of their accounts with some little addition of law expenses incurred in bringing them to open their purses, though the said purses may be all the time very well supplied with money. This might seem enough to explain the delay of settlement with Burns; but on the other hand, the time which had elapsed since the publication of the volume was not such as to appear very long

in the affairs of publishing—the ordinary practice of a bookseller who issues a book for an author being to render accounts annually, at June 30 or December 31, always upwards of six months from the day of publication, and pay only six months thereafter. If Creech had acted as publisher for Burns on this footing, there would have been nothing unusual in his still delaying payment; the money, indeed, for sales previous to June, would not have been due till the middle of the ensuing year. But we know that Burns's poems were published by subscription, Creech taking five hundred copies at the same rate as the other subscribers, with the view of selling them at one shilling of advance by way of profit. The publisher must have received the money due from a large proportion of the subscribers; and for this, as well as the price of his own copies (£125), it might be alleged that he was bound to pay immediately. He, on the other hand, would probably have to shew that much was still unpaid to him by the public; and if there were even a doubt on this point in his favour, he would be sure to take advantage of it. However matters actually stood, it is clear that Burns was excited to great anger by the delay of the settlement. And we must all see reason to deplore, either that he expected a settlement so soon, or that Creech put it off. Perhaps it would have been the most advisable course for Burns to have lived quietly with his brother at Mossgiel, leaving the profits of his book to be realised by some legal deputy. The time might have been improved by his writing fresh poems in the style of his *Halloween*, his *Cotter*, his *Epistles*, which would have been to him a fresh source of wealth. That he did not take this course, may we not set it down in part to the very absence of those temptations which we are now apt to deplore as making literary men mercenary? Had Burns been brought to fresh labours, even say it were by no higher motive than the désire of increasing his capital with a view to farming, it would have at least saved him in some degree from the dissipation of these precious months, and the increased bondage of self-indulgent habits. The industrious, we may be well assured, would have been the moral as well as the profitable course.

He had at length, early in December, resolved on leaving Edinburgh, at least temporarily, when an accident occurred to detain him. Let it first be mentioned that, at the same crisis, he made the acquaintance of his celebrated CLARINDA. This was a lady of exactly his own age, who, having been unhappily married to a man devoid of humanity and just moral feeling, was obliged to

live separately from him, in obscurity, and almost indigence, while bringing up her young family. The grand-niece of Colin Maclaurin, the friend of Newton—the cousin-german of Lord Craig, who was associated with Mackenzie in the composition of *The Mirror*—Agnes Craig might well be a woman of intellect superior to the generality of her sex. Her husband, Mr James M'Lehose, was now pushing his fortune in the West Indies, reckless of what might befall his wife or children. Of a somewhat voluptuous style of beauty, of lively and easy manners, of a poetical fabric of mind, with some wit, and not too high a degree of refinement or delicacy, Mrs M'Lehose was exactly the kind of woman to fascinate Burns. She might, indeed, be described as the town-bred or lady analogue of the country maidens who had exercised the greatest power over him in his earlier days. He, on the other hand, overcoming by his bright intelligence and its *éclatant* fruits all the vulgarities of fortune, was calculated to make a deep impression on a heart so susceptible as hers. A Miss Nimmo, an elderly lady with whom Burns seems to have become acquainted through Miss Chalmers, was a friend also of Mrs M'Lehose; and in her house, in consequence of the special request of the lady, the two met at tea about the 4th of December. Their epistolary correspondence was immediately commenced.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

Thursday Evening [*Dec.* 6, 1787.]

MADAM—I had set no small store by my tea-drinking to-night, and have not often been so disappointed. Saturday evening I shall embrace the opportunity with the greatest pleasure. I leave town this day se'ennight, and probably for a couple of twelvemonths; but must ever regret that I so lately got an acquaintance I shall ever highly esteem, and in whose welfare I shall ever be warmly interested.

Our worthy common friend, in her usual pleasant way, rallied me a good deal on my new acquaintance, and in the humour of her ideas I wrote some lines, which I enclose you, as I think they have a good deal of poetic merit; and Miss [Nimmo] tells me you are not only a critic but a poetess. Fiction, you know, is the native region of poetry; and I hope you will pardon my vanity in sending you the bagatelle as a tolerable off-hand *jeu d'esprit*. I have several poetic trifles which I shall gladly leave with Miss [Nimmo] or you, if they were worth houseroom; as there are scarcely two people on earth by whom it would mortify me more to be forgotten, though at the distance of ninescore miles. I am, madam, with the highest respect, your very humble servant, * * *

On Saturday the 8th, as implied in this letter, he was to have drunk tea at Mrs M'Lehose's house; but the night before he was overset by a drunken coachman, and sent home to Mr Cruikshank's with a severely bruised knee. The feelings with which the lady had inspired him at the first interview, and the interest with which he had looked forward to a second meeting, are expressed in his note of apology for non-appearance at her table:

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

Saturday Even. [*Dec.* 8.]

I can say with truth, madam, that I never met with a person in my life whom I more anxiously wished to meet again than yourself. To-night I was to have had that very great pleasure—I was intoxicated with the idea; but an unlucky fall from a coach has so bruised one of my knees, that I can't stir my leg off the cushion. So, if I don't see you again, I shall not rest in my grave for chagrin. I was vexed to the soul I had not seen you sooner. I determined to cultivate your friendship with the enthusiasm of religion: but thus has Fortune ever served me. I cannot bear the idea of leaving Edinburgh without seeing you. I know not how to account for it—I am strangely taken with some people, nor am I often mistaken. You are a stranger to me; but I am an odd being. Some yet unnamed feelings—things, not principles, but better than whims—carry me further than boasted reason ever did a philosopher.

Farewell! every happiness be yours. ROBERT BURNS.

Mrs M'Lehose answered on the spur of the moment in a frank genial letter, offering her sympathy, her friendship, as an alleviation, if they could be so; and saying: 'Were I your sister, I would call and see you.' She also enclosed a copy of verses which she had written after reading the little poem he had sent her, but disclaiming the possible imputation of their being *poetry*.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

I stretch a point, indeed, my dearest madam, when I answer your card on the rack of my present agony. Your friendship, madam! By heavens, I was never proud before. Your lines, I maintain it, are poetry, and good poetry; mine were indeed partly fiction, and partly a friendship which, had I been so blest as to have met with you *in time*, might have led me—God of love only knows where. Time is too short for ceremonies.

I swear solemnly (in all the tenor of my former oath) to remember you in all the pride and warmth of friendship until—I cease to be!

To-morrow, and every day, till I see you, you shall hear from me.

Farewell! May you enjoy a better night's repose than I am likely to have.

Next day, the lady replied with a gentle chiding about his romantic style of address, calling him to remember that she is a married woman, but telling him that it will be his own fault if she ever withdraws the friendship she has promised. Amidst some playful expressions, she asked if he would, Jacob-like, wait seven years for a wife, and even then perhaps be disappointed, like the patriarch. Perhaps in the days of Mrs M'Lehose, women of her grade were less reserved than now; it must be admitted, however, by those who knew the lady, that this example of freedom on her part was in some degree characteristic. Burns replied, apparently on the same day:

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

Your last, my dear madam, had the effect on me that Job's situation had on his friends when 'they sat down seven days and seven nights astonied, and spake not a word.'—'Pay my addresses to a married woman!' I started as if I had seen the ghost of him I had injured; I recollected my expressions; some of them indeed were, in the law phrase, 'habit and repute,' which is being half guilty. I cannot positively say, madam, whether my heart might not have gone astray a little; but I can declare, upon the honour of a poet, that the vagrant has wandered unknown to me. I have a pretty handsome troop of follies of my own; and like some other people's retinue, they are but undisciplined blackguards: but the luckless rascals have something of honour in them: they would not do a dishonest thing.

To meet with an unfortunate woman, amiable and young, deserted and widowed by those who were bound by every tie of duty, nature, and gratitude, to protect, comfort, and cherish her; add to all, when she is perhaps one of the first of lovely forms and noble minds, the mind, too, that hits one's taste as the joys of heaven do a saint—should a vague infant idea, the natural child of imagination, thoughtlessly peep over the fence—were you, my friend, to sit in judgment, and the poor airy straggler brought before you, trembling, self-condemned, with artless eyes, brimful of contrition, looking wistfully on its judge, you could not, my dear madam, condemn the hapless wretch to death 'without benefit of clergy?'

I won't tell you what reply my heart made to your raillery of

'seven years;' but I will give you what a brother of my trade says on the same allusion:

> 'The Patriarch, to gain a wife,
> Chaste, beautiful, and young,
> Served fourteen years a painful life,
> And never thought it long.
>
> Oh were you to reward such cares,
> And life so long would stay,
> Not fourteen but four hundred years
> Would seem but as one day!'

I have written you this scrawl because I have nothing else to do, and you may sit down and find fault with it, if you have no better way of consuming your time; but finding fault with the vagaries of a poet's fancy is much such another business as Xerxes chastising the waves of the Hellespont.

My limb now allows me to sit in some peace: to walk I have yet no prospect of, as I can't mark it to the ground.

I have just now looked over what I have written, and it is such a chaos of nonsense that I daresay you will throw it into the fire, and call me an idle, stupid fellow; but whatever you think of my brains, believe me to be, with the most sacred respect and heartfelt esteem, my dear madam, your humble servant, ROBERT BURNS.

It will appear surprising that, at the very time when he was thus acting upon a sudden thought to swear eternal friendship to an acquaintance of three days' standing, his mind was not in a romantic mood, but beset by gloomy and remorseful feeling, resulting from causes within and beyond his own control, some of which have already been hinted at. Had we a full revelation of the circumstances, it would probably present Burns in a predicament such as rarely befalls either poets or ordinary mortals: and the association of these circumstances with the high-flown terms in which he was addressing the sentimental and unconscious Mrs M'Lehose, would produce an incongruity most curious, as an illustration of the character of the Ayrshire Bard.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *Dec.* 12, 1787.

I am here under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion; and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself, have formed a 'quadruple alliance' to guarantee the other. I got my fall on Saturday, and am getting slowly better.

I have taken tooth and nail to the Bible, and am got through the

five books of Moses, and half-way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my bookbinder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town, and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

I would give my best song to my worst enemy—I mean the merit of making it—to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit.

I enclose you a proof-copy of the *Banks of the Devon*, which present with my best wishes to Charlotte. The *Ochil-hills*[1] you shall probably have next week for yourself. None of your fine speeches! R. B.

The Lord President of the Court of Session (Dundas) died on the 13th December, and it seems to have been suggested to Burns by Mr Charles Hay, advocate,[2] that he should bring his Muse into play for the celebration of the event. There must have been some reason beyond the merits of the president for Hay having advised this step, and for the proud soul of Burns having stooped to adopt it. He set to bewailing the decease of the great man in the usual style of the venal bards of the age of patronage, and, as might be expected, with no great success:

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF LORD PRESIDENT DUNDAS.[3]

Lone on the bleaky hills the straying flocks
Shun the fierce storms among the sheltering rocks;
Down from the rivulets, red with dashing rains,
The gathering floods burst o'er the distant plains;
Beneath the blasts the leafless forests groan;
The hollow caves return a sullen moan.

Ye hills, ye plains, ye forests, and ye caves,
Ye howling winds, and wintry swelling waves!
Unheard, unseen, by human ear or eye,
Sad to your sympathetic scenes I fly;
Where to the whistling blast and water's roar
Pale Scotia's recent wound I may deplore.
Oh heavy loss, thy country ill could bear!
A loss these evil days can ne'er repair!

[1] The song in honour of Miss Chalmers, beginning 'Where braving angry winter's storms.'

[2] Ultimately a judge, under the designation of Lord Newton. He died, October 19, 1811, leaving a strong reputation for his bacchanalianism, of which many whimsical anecdotes are told.

[3] Robert Dundas of Arniston, elder brother of Viscount Melville, was born 1713, appointed president in 1760, and died December 13, 1787, after a short illness.

Justice, the high vicegerent of her God,
Her doubtful balance eyed, and swayed her rod;
Hearing the tidings of the fatal blow
She sank, abandoned to the wildest wo.

Wrongs, injuries, from many a darksome den,
Now gay in hope explore the paths of men:
See from his cavern grim Oppression rise,
And throw on Poverty his cruel eyes;
Keen on the helpless victim see him fly,
And stifle, dark, the feebly-bursting cry.

Mark ruffian Violence, distained with crimes,
Rousing elate in these degenerate times;
View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,
As guileful Fraud points out the erring way:
While subtle Litigation's pliant tongue
The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong:
Hark, injured Want recounts th' unlistened tale,
And much-wronged Misery pours th' unpitied wail!

Ye dark waste hills, and brown unsightly plains,
To you I sing my grief-inspirèd strains:
Ye tempests, rage! ye turbid torrents, roll!
Ye suit the joyless tenor of my soul.
Life's social haunts and pleasures I resign,
Be nameless wilds and lonely wanderings mine,
To mourn the woes my country must endure,
That wound degenerate ages cannot cure.

TO CHARLES HAY, ESQ., ADVOCATE.

(ENCLOSING VERSES ON THE DEATH OF THE LORD PRESIDENT.)

SIR—The enclosed poem was written in consequence of your suggestion last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. It cost me an hour or two of next morning's sleep, but did not please me: so it lay by, an ill-digested effort, till the other day that I gave it a critic brush. These kind of subjects are much hackneyed; and, besides, the wailings of the rhyming tribe over the ashes of the great are cursedly suspicious, and out of all character for sincerity. These ideas damped my Muse's fire; however, I have done the best I could, and, at all events, it gives me an opportunity of declaring that I have the honour to be, sir, your obliged humble servant, R. B.

Burns sent a copy of the poem to Dundas's son, afterwards Lord Advocate and Lord Chief-Baron, but received no answer to it, which he greatly resented.

A business note which Burns wrote about this time may be introduced, as shewing how apt his mind was, even on the most trivial subjects, to scintillate out vivid expressions and droll or fanciful ideas:

TO MR FRANCIS HOWDEN,

JEWELLER, PARLIAMENT SQUARE.[1]

The bearer of this will deliver you a small shade[2] to set; which, my dear sir, if you would highly oblige a poor cripple devil as I am at present, you will finish at furthest against to-morrow evening. It goes a hundred miles into the country; and if it is at me by five o'clock to-morrow evening, I have an opportunity of a private hand to convey it; if not, I don't know how to get it sent. Set it just as you did the others you did for me—'in the neatest and cheapest manner;' both to answer as a breast-pin, and with a ring to answer as a locket. Do despatch it; as it is, I believe, the pledge of love, and perhaps the prelude to ma-tri-mo-ny. Everybody knows the auld wife's observation when she saw a poor dog going to be hanged —'God help us! it's the gate we ha'e a' to gang!'

The parties, one of them at least, is a very particular acquaintance of mine—the honest lover. He only needs a little of an advice which my grandmother, rest her soul, often gave me, and I as often neglected—

'Leuk twice or [ere] ye loup ance.'

Let me conjure you, my friend, by the bended bow of Cupid—by the unloosed cestus of Venus—by the lighted torch of Hymen—that you will have the locket finished by the time mentioned! And if your worship would have as much Christian charity as call with it yourself, and comfort a poor wretch, not wounded indeed by Cupid's arrow, but bruised by a good, serious, agonising, damned, hard knock on the knee, you will gain the earnest prayers, when he does pray, of, dear sir, your humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.[3]

ST JAMES'S SQUARE, *No.* 2, *Attic Story.*

[1] Mr Francis Howden, who died at an advanced age in 1848, was well known in his native city as an energetic reformer. He was the last surviving person I am aware of who remembered Robert Fergusson.

[2] A silhouette portrait.

[3] A relative of Mr Howden communicates the following anecdote:—At Lord Monboddo's, Burns met Dr Gregory, who, feeling some interest in the physiology of such a prodigy of genius, began to question him about his family history. The bard had been dining with Mr Howden, and was much in a humour for waggery. 'Well, Burns,' said the learned physician, 'what sort of man was your father?—a tall man?' 'Yes, rather.' 'A dark-complexioned man?' 'Yes.' 'And your mother?' 'My mother was not a man at all, sir.' By this grammatical quip the doctor was sadly discomfited; and Burns next day made his friend Howden laugh heartily at the joke in his shop in the Parliament Square.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, 19*th Dec.* 1787.

I begin this letter in answer to yours of the 17th current, which is not yet cold since I read it. The atmosphere of my soul is vastly clearer than when I wrote you last. For the first time, yesterday I crossed the room on crutches. It would do your heart good to see my bardship, not on my poetic, but on my oaken stilts; throwing my best leg with an air! and with as much hilarity in my gait and countenance, as a May frog leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long-expected shower!

I can't say I am altogether at my ease when I see anywhere in my path that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre—Poverty; attended as he always is by iron-fisted Oppression, and leering Contempt; but I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-laboured day already, and still my motto is—I DARE! My worst enemy is *moi même*. I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of Imagination, Whim, Caprice, and Passion; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of Wisdom, Prudence, and Forethought move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and, alas! frequent defeat. There are just two creatures I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear. R. B.

There is a gap in the M'Lehose correspondence after the last letter. In some of the missing letters, it had been arranged that they should for the future sign their epistles respectively as Sylvander and Clarinda, and the lady had latterly communicated some of her verses to the poet:

TO CLARINDA.

Friday Evening [21*st Dec.*]

I beg your pardon, my dear 'Clarinda,' for the fragment scrawl I sent you yesterday. I really do not know what I wrote. A gentleman for whose character, abilities, and critical knowledge I have the highest veneration, called in just as I had begun the second sentence, and I would not make the porter wait. I read to my much-respected friend several of my own bagatelles, and, among others, your lines, which I had copied out. He began some criticisms on them as on the other pieces, when I informed him they were the work of a young lady in this town, which, I assure you, made him stare. My learned friend seriously protested that he did

not believe any young woman in Edinburgh was capable of such lines; and if you know anything of Professor Gregory, you will neither doubt of his abilities nor his sincerity. I do love you, if possible, still better for having so fine a taste and turn for poesy. I have again gone wrong in my usual unguarded way, but you may erase the word, and put esteem, respect, or any other tame Dutch expression you please in its place. I believe there is no holding converse, or carrying on correspondence, with an amiable woman, much less a *gloriously amiable fine woman*, without some mixture of that delicious passion whose most devoted slave I have more than once had the honour of being. But why be hurt or offended on that account? Can no honest man have a prepossession for a fine woman, but he must run his head against an intrigue? Take a little of the tender witchcraft of love, and add to it the generous, the honourable sentiments of manly friendship, and I know but *one* more delightful morsel which few, few in any rank ever taste. Such a composition is like adding cream to strawberries: it not only gives the fruit a more elegant richness, but has a peculiar deliciousness of its own.

I enclose you a few lines I composed on a late melancholy occasion.[1] I will not give above five or six copies of it at all, and I would be hurt if any friend should give any copies without my consent.

You cannot imagine, Clarinda (I like the idea of Arcadian names in a commerce of this kind), how much store I have set by the hopes of your future friendship. I do not know if you have a just idea of my character, but I wish you to see me as I am. I am, as most people of my trade are, a strange Will-o'-wisp being; the victim, too frequently, of much imprudence and many follies. My great constituent elements are *pride* and *passion*. The first I have endeavoured to humanise into integrity and honour; the last makes me a devotee to the warmest degree of enthusiasm in love, religion, or friendship—either of them, or all together, as I happen to be inspired. 'Tis true, I never saw you but once; but how much acquaintance did I form with you in that once! Do not think I flatter you, or have a design upon you, Clarinda: I have too much pride for the one, and too little cold contrivance for the other; but of all God's creatures I ever could approach in the beaten way of my acquaintance, you struck me with the deepest, the strongest, the most permanent impression. I say the most permanent, because I know myself well, and how far I can promise either in my prepossessions or powers. Why are you unhappy? And why are so many of our fellow-creatures, unworthy to belong to the same species with you, blest with all they can wish! You have a hand all benevolent to give: why were you denied the pleasure? You have a heart formed—gloriously formed—for all the most

[1] Probably the verses on the death of the Lord President.

refined luxuries of love: why was that heart ever wrung? Oh Clarinda! shall we not meet in a state, some yet unknown state of being, where the lavish hand of Plenty shall minister to the highest wish of Benevolence, and where the chill north wind of Prudence shall never blow over the flowery fields of Enjoyment? If we do not, man was made in vain! I deserved most of the unhappy hours that have lingered over my head; they were the wages of my labour: but what unprovoked demon, malignant as hell, stole upon the confidence of unmistrusting busy fate, and dashed *your* cup of life with undeserved sorrow?

Let me know how long your stay will be out of town; I shall count the hours till you inform me of your return. Cursed *etiquette* forbids your seeing me just now; and so soon as I can walk, I must bid Edinburgh adieu. Lord! why was I born to see misery which I cannot relieve, and to meet with friends whom I cannot enjoy? I look back with the pang of unavailing avarice on my loss in not knowing you sooner; all last winter, these three months past, what luxury of intercourse have I not lost! Perhaps, though, 'twas better for my peace. You see I am either above or incapable of dissimulation. I believe it is want of that particular genius. I despise design, because I want either coolness or wisdom to be capable of it. I am interrupted. Adieu! my dear Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

Burns was attended in his illness by Dr Gregory as physician, while Mr Alexander Wood officiated as his surgeon. It was thus that he had an opportunity of exhibiting Clarinda's poetry before the eyes of one who was reckoned in his day and place as the prince of critics. The large intelligence, vigorous thought, and high-minded benevolence of the learned author of the *Conspectus Medicinæ*, had deeply impressed the Ayrshire poet from their first meetings at Lord Monboddo's in the past winter. Perhaps even their common liability to the *sæva indignatio* where their feelings were offended by foolish or sordid conduct, had helped to strengthen the friendship which arose between these men, so different in their education and position in life. A gentleman in Glasgow possesses a copy of an English translation of Cicero's Select Orations (London, 1756), which had belonged to Burns, and which bears on a fly-leaf the following inscription in the bard's handwriting:—'EDIN. 23*d April* 1787.—This book, a present from the truly worthy and learned Dr GREGORY, I shall preserve to my latest hour, as a mark of the gratitude, esteem, and veneration I bear the Donor. So help me God! ROBERT BURNS.'

Mrs M'Lehose answered the same evening, but hurriedly. She disclaimed being unhappy, notwithstanding scenes in her life

horrible to recollection. 'Religion,' she says, 'has been my balm in every wo.' She sends him 'a simile'—

'The morning sun shines glorious and bright,
And fills the heart with wonder and delight!
He dazzles in meridian splendour seen,
Without a blackening cloud to intervene.
So at a distance viewed, your genius bright,
Your wit, your flowing numbers, give delight.
But, ah! when Error's darkening clouds arise,
When Passion's thunder, Folly's lightning flies,
More safe we gaze, but Admiration dies.
And as the tempting brightness snares the moth,
Sure Ruin marks too near approach to both.'

In another letter, the lady enclosed a set of verses, apparently in answer to some wild expressions of his—

'Talk not of Love—it gives me pain,
For Love has been my foe:
He bound me in an iron chain,
And plunged me deep in wo!

But Friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was formed to prove—
The worthy object be of those,
But never talk of Love!

The Hand of Friendship I accept—
May Honour be our guard!
Virtue our intercourse direct,
Her smiles our dear reward.'

TO CLARINDA.

My dear Clarinda—Your last verses have so delighted me, that I have copied them in among some of my own most valued pieces, which I keep sacred for my own use. Do let me have a few now and then.

Did you, madam, know what I feel when you talk of your sorrows!

Good God! that one who has so much worth in the sight of Heaven, and is so amiable to her fellow-creatures, should be so unhappy! I can't venture out for cold. My limb is vastly better; but I have not any use of it without my crutches. Monday, for the first time, I dine in a neighbour's, next door. As soon as I can go so far, *even in a coach*, my first visit shall be to you. Write me when you leave town, and immediately when you return; and I earnestly pray your stay may be short. You can't imagine how miserable you made me when you hinted to me not to write. Farewell! Sylvander.

Some further light is thrown on Burns's feelings in this affair

by a letter to his old Irvine friend, Richard Brown, who was now at home, while his vessel, the *Mary and Jean,* lay at Greenock waiting cargo for Grenada:—

TO MR RICHARD BROWN, IRVINE.[1]

EDINBURGH, 30*th Dec.* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—I have met with few things in life which have given me more pleasure than Fortune's kindness to you since those days in which we met in the vale of misery; as I can honestly say, that I never knew a man who more truly deserved it, or to whom my heart more truly wished it. I have been much indebted since that time to your story and sentiments for steeling my mind against evils, of which I have had a pretty decent share. My Will-o'-wisp fate you know: do you recollect a Sunday we spent together in Eglinton woods? You told me, on my repeating some verses to you, that you wondered I could resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine. It was from this remark I derived that idea of my own pieces which encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet. I am happy to hear that you will be two or three months at home. As soon as a bruised limb will permit me, I shall return to Ayrshire, and we shall meet; 'and faith I hope we'll not sit dumb, nor yet cast out!'

I have much to tell you 'of men, their manners, and their ways;' perhaps a little of the other sex. Apropos, I beg to be remembered to Mrs Brown. There, I doubt not, my dear friend, but you have found substantial happiness. I expect to find you something of an altered, but not a different man: the wild, bold, generous young fellow, composed into the steady affectionate husband, and the fond careful parent. For me, I am just the same Will-o'-wisp being I used to be. About the first and fourth quarters of the moon, I generally set in for the trade-wind of Wisdom; but about the full and change, I am the luckless victim of mad tornadoes, which blow me into Chaos. Almighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom; and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow,[2] who has wit and wisdom more murderously fatal than the assassinating stiletto of the Sicilian bandit, or the poisoned arrow of the savage African. My Highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have gravely removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command, in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the following verses, which she sent me the other day. * * *

My best compliments to our friend Allan. Adieu! R. B.

[1] 'The letters to Richard Brown, written at a period when the poet was in the full blaze of reputation, shewed that he was at no time so dazzled with success as to forget the friends who had anticipated the public by discovering his merit.'—WALKER.

[2] A widow only in one sense. In reality, a deserted wife.

The cordial feelings which Burns expresses in this letter, while a man of fame and some importance, towards an old friend of his obscure days, are amongst the things which give a favourable impression of his character. He never at any time was the man who, in elevated society, would resort to the meanness of denying or overlooking the child of honest poverty. Of this we have heard from various surviving friends of his an illustrative anecdote not heretofore printed. One day, walking from Edinburgh to Leith with a modish city friend, he met on Leith Walk a rustic in very plain attire, whom he instantly hailed as an old Ayrshire acquaintance. After a short, but friendly conversation with this person, he rejoined his city friend, who expressed some surprise at his condescending to speak to any such shabby clown. 'What!' said the manly bard, 'do you think it was the man's clothes I was speaking to—his hat, his coat, and his waistcoat? No! It was the man within the coat and waistcoat I was speaking to; and that man, let me tell you, has more sense and worth than nine out of ten of my fine Edinburgh friends!'

TO CLARINDA.

[*After New Year*, 1788.]

You are right, my dear Clarinda: a friendly correspondence goes for nothing, except one write their undisguised sentiments. Yours please me for their intrinsic merit, as well as because they are *yours*, which, I assure you, is to me a high recommendation. Your religious sentiments, madam, I revere. If you have, on some suspicious evidence, from some lying oracle, learned that I despise or ridicule so sacredly important a matter as real religion, you have, my Clarinda, much misconstrued your friend. 'I am not mad, most noble Festus!' Have you ever met a perfect character? Do we not sometimes rather exchange faults than get rid of them? For instance, I am perhaps tired with, and shocked at a life too much the prey of giddy inconsistencies and thoughtless follies; by degrees I grow sober, prudent, and statedly pious—I say statedly, because the most unaffected devotion is not at all inconsistent with my first character—I join the world in congratulating myself on the happy change. But let me pry more narrowly into this affair. Have I, at bottom, anything of a secret pride in these endowments and emendations? Have I nothing of a Presbyterian sourness, a hypocritical severity, when I survey my less regular neighbours? In a word, have I missed all those nameless and numberless modifications of indistinct selfishness, which are so near our own eyes, that we can scarcely bring them within the sphere of our vision, and which the

known spotless cambric of our character hides from the ordinary observer?

My definition of worth is short: truth and humanity respecting our fellow-creatures; reverence and humility in the presence of that Being, my Creator and Preserver, and who, I have every reason to believe, will one day be my Judge. The first part of my definition is the creature of unbiassed instinct; the last is the child of after reflection. Where I found these two essentials, I would gently note, and slightly mention, any attendant flaws—flaws, the marks, the consequences of human nature.

I can easily enter into the sublime pleasures that your strong imagination and keen sensibility must derive from religion, particularly if a little in the shade of misfortune; but I own I cannot, without a marked grudge, see Heaven totally engross so amiable, so charming a woman, as my friend Clarinda; and should be very well pleased at *a circumstance* that would put it in the power of somebody (happy somebody!) to divide her attention, with all the delicacy and tenderness of an earthly attachment.

You will not easily persuade me that you have not a grammatical knowledge of the English language. So far from being inaccurate, you are elegant beyond any woman of my acquaintance, except one, whom I wish you knew.

Your last verses to me have so delighted me, that I have got an excellent old Scots air that suits the measure, and you shall see them in print in the *Scots Musical Museum*, a work publishing by a friend of mine in this town. I want four stanzas; you gave me but three, and one of them alluded to an expression in my former letter; so I have taken your two first verses, with a slight alteration in the second, and have added a third; but you must help me to a fourth. Here they are: the latter half of the first stanza would have been worthy of Sappho; I am in raptures with it.

'Talk not of Love, it gives me pain,
For Love has been my foe:
He bound me with an iron chain,
And sunk me deep in wo.

But Friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was formed to prove:
There, welcome, win and wear the prize,
But never talk of love.'

Your friendship much can make me blest,
O why that bliss destroy!
[only]
Why urge the odious one request,
[will]
You know I must deny.

The alteration in the second stanza is no improvement, but there

was a slight inaccuracy in your rhyme. The third I only offer to your choice, and have left two words for your determination. The air is *The Banks of Spey*, and is most beautiful.

To-morrow evening I intend taking a chair, and paying a visit at Park Place to a much-valued old friend. If I could be sure of finding you at home (and I will send one of the chairmen to call), I would spend from five to six o'clock with you, as I go past. I cannot do more at this time, as I have something on my hand that hurries me much. I propose giving you the first call, my old friend the second, and Miss ——, as I return home. Do not break any engagement for me, as I will spend another evening with you at anyrate before I leave town.

Do not tell me that you are pleased when your friends inform you of your faults. I am ignorant what they are; but I am sure they must be such evanescent trifles, compared with your personal and mental accomplishments, that I would despise the ungenerous narrow soul who would notice any shadow of imperfections you may seem to have any other way than in the most delicate agreeable raillery. Coarse minds are not aware how much they injure the keenly feeling tie of bosom-friendship, when in their foolish officiousness they mention what nobody cares for recollecting. People of nice sensibility and generous minds have a certain intrinsic dignity, that fires at being trifled with, or lowered, or even too nearly approached.

You need make no apology for long letters: I am even with you. Many happy New-years to you, charming Clarinda! I can't dissemble were it to shun perdition. He who sees you as I have done, and does not love you, deserves to be damned for his stupidity! He who loves you, and would injure you, deserves to be doubly damned for his villainy! Adieu.

SYLVANDER.

P.S.—What would you think of this for a fourth stanza?

Your thought, if love must harbour there,
  Conceal it in that thought,
Nor cause me from my bosom tear
  The very friend I sought.

The visit promised by the poet in his last letter took place, and seems to have afforded an opportunity for his giving Clarinda some account of his past life and present circumstances. He had, amongst other things, spoken of his infant son, now the only survivor of the twins born by Jean Armour in September of the year before last.

TO CLARINDA.

Some days, some nights, nay, some *hours*, like the 'ten righteous persons in Sodom,' save the rest of the vapid, tiresome, miserable months and years of life. One of these hours my dear Clarinda blest me with yesternight.

> ———'One well-spent hour,
> In such a tender circumstance for friends,
> Is better than an age of common time!'—THOMSON.

My favourite feature in Milton's Satan, is his manly fortitude in supporting what cannot be remedied—in short, the wild broken fragments of a noble exalted mind in ruins. I meant no more by saying he was a favourite hero of mine.

I mentioned to you my letter to Dr Moore, giving an account of my life: it is truth, every word of it, and will give you the just idea of a man whom you have honoured with your friendship. I am afraid you will hardly be able to make sense of so torn a piece. Your verses I shall muse on, deliciously, as I gaze on your image in my mind's eye, in my heart's core: they will be in time enough for a week to come. I am truly happy your headache is better.—Oh, how can pain or evil be so daringly, unfeelingly, cruelly savage as to wound so noble a mind, so lovely a form!

My little fellow is all my namesake. Write me soon. My every strongest good wish attend you, Clarinda! SYLVANDER.

I know not what I have written—I am pestered with people around me.

In this letter was enclosed his autobiography, apparently in consequence of a promise he had made at the late interview. Clarinda told him, in answer, that she had read it as Desdemona listened to the narration of Othello. One thing, however, affected her painfully—his hostility to Calvinism, of which she, from conviction, was an adherent. She wished him seriously to examine the subject, as she had done. She also glanced at a declaration he had once made to her, that he never could find a woman who could love as ardently as himself. She can well believe it, and would have him rather not marry at all than join himself to any other person. 'Unless,' she says, 'a woman were qualified for the companion, the friend, and the mistress, she would not do for you. The last may gain Sylvander, but the others alone can keep him.' In a postscript she announced—and perhaps Burns felt that this was a very important postscript—that she was to be in

his square 'this afternoon near two o'clock;' when, if his room was towards the street, she would have the pleasure of giving him a nod.

TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Night [*Jan.* 8?]

I am delighted, charming Clarinda, with your honest enthusiasm for religion. Those of either sex, but particularly the female, who are lukewarm in that most important of all things, 'O my soul, come not thou into their secrets!' I feel myself deeply interested in your good opinion, and will lay before you the outlines of my belief. He who is our Author and Preserver, and will one day be our Judge, must be (not for his sake in the way of duty, but from the native impulse of our hearts) the object of our reverential awe and grateful adoration: He is Almighty and all-bounteous, we are weak and dependent; hence prayer and every other sort of devotion. ——'He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life;' consequently, it must be in every one's power to embrace his offer of 'everlasting life;' otherwise he could not, in justice, condemn those who did not. A mind pervaded, actuated, and governed by purity, truth, and charity, though it does not *merit* heaven, yet is an absolutely necessary pre-requisite, without which heaven can neither be obtained nor enjoyed; and, by divine promise, such a mind shall never fail of attaining 'everlasting life:' hence the impure, the deceiving, and the uncharitable, extrude themselves from eternal bliss, by their unfitness for enjoying it. The Supreme Being has put the immediate administration of all this, for wise and good ends known to himself, into the hands of Jesus Christ—a great personage, whose relation to him we cannot comprehend, but whose relation to us is [that of] a guide and Saviour; and who, except for our own obstinacy and misconduct, will bring us all, through various ways, and by various means, to bliss at last.

These are my tenets, my lovely friend; and which, I think, cannot be well disputed. My creed is pretty nearly expressed in the last clause of Jamie Deans's grace, an honest weaver in Ayrshire: 'Lord, grant that we may lead a gude life! for a gude life maks a gude end; at least it helps weel!'

I am flattered by the entertainment you tell me you have found in my packet. You see me as I have been, you know me as I am, and may guess at what I am likely to be. I, too, may say, 'Talk not of love,' &c., for indeed he has 'plunged me deep in wo!' Not that I ever saw a woman who pleased unexceptionably, as my Clarinda elegantly says, 'in the companion, the friend, and the mistress.' *One*, indeed, I could except—*One*, before passion threw its mists over my discernment, I knew, *the* first of women! Her

name is indelibly written in my heart's core—but I dare not look in on it—a degree of agony would be the consequence. Oh! thou perfidious, cruel, mischief-making demon, who presidest over that frantic passion—thou mayst, thou dost poison my peace, but thou shalt not taint my honour—I would not, for a single moment, give an asylum to the most distant imagination, that would shadow the faintest outline of a selfish gratification, at the expense of her whose happiness is twisted with the threads of my existence.——May she be as happy as she deserves! And if my tenderest, faithfulest friendship can add to her bliss, I shall at least have one solid mine of enjoyment in my bosom! *Don't guess at these ravings!*

I watched at our front window to-day, but was disappointed. It has been a day of disappointments. I am just risen from a two hours' bout after supper, with silly or sordid souls, who could relish nothing in common with me but the port.——*One.*——'Tis now 'witching time of night;' and whatever is out of joint in the foregoing scrawl, impute it to enchantments and spells; for I can't look over it, but will seal it up directly, as I don't care for to-morrow's criticisms on it.

You are by this time fast asleep, Clarinda; may good angels attend and guard you as constantly and faithfully as my good wishes do.

> 'Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
> Shot forth peculiar graces.'

John Milton, I wish thy soul better rest than I expect on my pillow to-night! Oh for a little of the cart-horse part of human nature! Good-night, my dearest Clarinda! SYLVANDER.

We have in this letter an explicit view of the poet's religious convictions. In addressing an orthodox lady, whose good opinion he was anxious to gain and keep, he would not understate his faith; yet we see that it does not come up to the orthodox standard. It makes good works nearly all-sufficient. At the same time, Burns avows devout feelings and pious practices. Such had now been for several years the religious character and condition of our great poet; and he does not appear to have afterwards greatly changed his views. What might have been the difference had Burns been reared under a system more captivating to the imaginative part of our nature, and more easily to be reconciled to philanthropical feelings, it would be vain to conjecture. As it is, the orthodox Presbyterian Calvinist has the regret of viewing the vigorous intellect of Burns as one which wholly repudiated, and lived in direct antagonism with that code of doctrine which has been so long, and with so little variation, maintained in Scotland.

In Clarinda's letter, written next morning, but not sent away till it was furnished with a postscript a day later, she speaks of her children, one of whom is ill, and requires her care: then she adverts to Fielding's Amelia, and says she could be equally forgiving to a penitent husband, if he did not treat herself with positive unkindness. She cannot imagine who is the fair one he alludes to in his last epistle. She first thought of his Jean, though uncertain if she possesses his 'tenderest, faithfulest friendship.' She cannot understand that bonny lassie—refusing him after such proofs of love. She admires him for his continued fondness towards her. Finally, she promises to fulfil her promise of giving him a nod at his window.

TO CLARINDA.

Thursday Noon [*Jan.* 10?]

I am certain I saw you, Clarinda; but you don't look to the proper story for a poet's lodging,

'Where Speculation roosted near the sky.'

I could almost have thrown myself over for very vexation. Why didn't you look higher? It has spoilt my peace for this day. To be so near my charming Clarinda; to miss her look while it was searching for me. I am sure the soul is capable of disease, for mine has convulsed itself into an inflammatory fever. I am sorry for your little boy: do let me know to-morrow how he is.

You have converted me, Clarinda (I shall love that name while I live; there is heavenly music in it!) Booth and Amelia I know well. Your sentiments on that subject, as they are on every subject, are just and noble. 'To be feelingly alive to kindness and to unkindness,' is a charming female character.

What I said in my last letter, the powers of fuddling sociality only know for me. By yours, I understand my good star has been partly in my horizon when I got wild in my reveries. Had that evil planet, which has almost all my life shed its baleful rays on my devoted head, been as usual in its zenith, I had certainly blabbed something that would have pointed out to you the dear object of my tenderest friendship, and, in spite of me, something more. Had that fatal information escaped me, and it was merely chance or kind stars that it did not, I had been undone! You would never have written me, except, perhaps, *once* more! Oh, I could curse circumstances! and the coarse tie of human laws which keeps fast what common sense would loose, and which bars that happiness itself cannot give—happiness which otherwise love and honour would warrant! But hold—I shall make no more 'hairbreadth 'scapes.'

My friendship, Clarinda, is a liferent business. My likings are both strong and eternal. I told you I had but one male friend: I have but two female. I should have a third, but she is surrounded by the blandishments of flattery and courtship. Her I register in my heart's core by Peggy Chalmers: Miss Nimmo can tell you how divine she is. She is worthy of a place in the same bosom with my Clarinda! That is the highest compliment I can pay her. Farewell, Clarinda! Remember SYLVANDER.

In her answer of the evening of the same day, Clarinda deplores her inability to detect the poet's window. She chides him for his ravings, and entreats him to limit himself to friendship. She is proud of being ranked with Miss Chalmers; but wonders he does not include Miss Nimmo, who has a sincere regard for him. 'She has almost wept to me at mentioning your intimacy with a certain famous or infamous man in town [Nicol?] I composed lines addressed to you some time ago, containing a hint upon the occasion. I had not courage to send them to you; if you say you will not be angry, I will yet.' This allusion, it will be found, calls forth the jealous irritability of the poet. She promises that her next letter shall be on her favourite theme—religion. Finally, she hints a wish that he could join her in a drive in 'the Fly' to Leith, whither she has to take her ailing child for the air.

TO CLARINDA.

Saturday Morning.

Your thoughts on religion, Clarinda, shall be welcome. You may perhaps distrust me when I say 'tis also my favourite topic; but mine is the religion of the bosom. I hate the very idea of a controversial divinity; as I firmly believe that every honest, upright man, of whatever sect, will be accepted of the Deity. If your verses, as you seem to hint, contain censure, except you want an occasion to break with me, don't send them. I have a little infirmity in my disposition, that where I fondly love or highly esteem, I cannot bear reproach.

'Reverence thyself' is a sacred maxim, and I wish to cherish it. I think I told you Lord Bolingbroke's saying to Swift: 'Adieu, dear Swift, with all thy faults I love thee entirely; make an effort to love me with all mine.' A glorious sentiment, and without which there can be no friendship! I do highly, very highly esteem you indeed, Clarinda—you merit it all! Perhaps, too, I scorn dissimulation! I could fondly love you: judge, then, what a maddening sting your reproach would be. 'Oh! I have sins to *Heaven*, but

none to *you!*' With what pleasure would I meet you to-day, but I cannot walk to meet the Fly. I hope to be able to see you on *foot*, about the middle of next week.

I am interrupted—perhaps you are not sorry for it, you will tell me—but I won't anticipate blame. Oh, Clarinda! did you know how dear to me is your look of kindness, your smile of approbation! you would not, either in prose or verse, risk a censorious remark.

> 'Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,
> That tends to make one worthy man my foe!'

SYLVANDER.

After a letter from Clarinda, which has been lost, Sylvander writes as follows:—

TO CLARINDA.

You talk of weeping, Clarinda: some involuntary drops wet your lines as I read them. Offend me, my dearest angel! You cannot offend me—you never offended me. If you had ever given me the least shadow of offence, so pardon me my God as I forgive Clarinda. I have read yours again; it has blotted my paper. Though I find your letter has agitated me into a violent headache, I shall take a chair, and be with you about eight. A friend is to be with us at tea, on my account, which hinders me from coming sooner. Forgive, my dearest Clarinda, my unguarded expressions! For Heaven's sake, forgive me, or I shall never be able to bear my own mind!—Your unhappy SYLVANDER.

On a Saturday night, then, after eight o'clock, Burns and his enthusiastic lady-friend had their *third* meeting—the second which had taken place in her own house and without other company. In a letter addressed to him next day, she tells him that the evening had been to her 'one of the most exquisite she had ever experienced.' But, though there had been no actual impropriety in her conduct, she did not feel at ease, because she knew that her present course of procedure would be painful to a friend to whom she was bound by the sacred ties of gratitude. Burns had seen her 'behind the scenes,' and must now know that she has faults. She means well, but is liable to be the victim of her sensibility. She agrees with him in preferring the religion of the bosom, but points out how poor a pretension to the acceptance of God can be made from a good life. One expression towards the conclusion of her letter is remarkable: 'Our last interview has raised you very high in mine [esteem]. I have met with few, indeed, of your sex who *understood delicacy in such circumstances.*'

She adds: 'I subscribe to Lord B.'s sentiment to Swift; yet some faults I shall still sigh over, though you style it reproach even to hint them.'

TO CLARINDA.

Monday Even. 11 *o'clock.*

Why have I not heard from you, Clarinda? To-day I expected it; and before supper, when a letter to me was announced, my heart danced with rapture: but behold, 'twas some fool, who had taken it into his head to turn poet, and made me an offering of the first-fruits of his nonsense. 'It is not poetry, but prose run mad.' Did I ever repeat to you an epigram I made on a Mr Elphinstone, who has given a translation of Martial, a famous Latin poet? The poetry of Elphinstone can only equal his prose notes. I was sitting in a merchant's shop of my acquaintance, waiting somebody; he put Elphinstone into my hand, and asked my opinion of it; I begged leave to write it on a blank leaf, which I did.

TO MR ELPHINSTONE, &c.

Oh thou, whom poesy abhors!
Whom prose has turned out of doors!
Heard'st thou yon groan? Proceed no further;
'Twas laurel'd Martial calling murther!

I am determined to see you, if at all possible, on Saturday evening. Next week I must sing—

The night is my departing night,
  The morn 's the day I maun awa';
There 's neither friend nor foe o' mine
  But wishes that I were awa'!

What I hae done for lack o' wit,
  I never, never can reca';
I hope ye 're a' my friends as yet—
  Gude night, and joy be wi' you a'!

If I could see you sooner, I would be so much the happier; but I would not purchase the dearest gratification on earth, if it must be at your expense in worldly censure, far less inward peace!

I shall certainly be ashamed of thus scrawling whole sheets of incoherence. The only *unity* (a sad word with poets and critics!) in my ideas is CLARINDA. There my heart 'reigns and revels!'

'What art thou, Love? Whence are those charms,
  That thus thou bear'st an universal rule?
For thee the soldier quits his arms,
  The king turns slave, the wise man fool.
In vain we chase thee from the field,
  And with cool thoughts resist thy yoke:
Next tide of blood, alas! we yield,
  And all those high resolves are broke!'

I like to have quotations for every occasion. They give one's ideas so pat, and save one the trouble of finding expression adequate to one's feelings. I think it is one of the greatest pleasures attending a poetic genius, that we can give our woes, cares, joys, loves, &c., an embodied form in verse, which to me is ever immediate ease. Goldsmith says finely of his Muse:

> 'Thou source of all my bliss and all my wo;
> Thou found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so.'

My limb has been so well to-day, that I have gone up and down stairs often without my staff. To-morrow, I hope to walk once again on my own legs to dinner. It is only next street. Adieu.

SYLVANDER.

The last letter of Clarinda having been received soon after the above epistle had been despatched, he writes again—

TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Evening [*Jan.* 15?]

That you have faults, my Clarinda, I never doubted; but I knew not where they existed, and Saturday night made me more in the dark than ever. Oh, Clarinda! why will you wound my soul by hinting that last night must have lessened my opinion of you? True I was 'behind the scenes' with you; but what did I see? A bosom glowing with honour and benevolence; a mind ennobled by genius, informed and refined by education and reflection, and exalted by native religion, genuine as in the climes of heaven; a heart formed for all the glorious meltings of friendship, love, and pity. These I saw: I saw the noblest immortal soul creation ever shewed me.

I looked long, my dear Clarinda, for your letter; and am vexed that you are complaining. I have not caught you so far wrong as in your idea, that the commerce you have with *one* friend hurts you if you cannot tell every tittle of it to *another*. Why have so injurious a suspicion of a good God, Clarinda, as to think that Friendship and Love, on the sacred inviolate principles of Truth, Honour, and Religion, can be anything else than an object of His divine approbation?

I have mentioned, in some of my former scrawls, Saturday evening next. Do allow me to wait on you that evening. Oh, my angel! how soon must we part!—and when can we meet again? I looked forward on the horrid interval with tearful eyes! What have I lost by not knowing you sooner! I fear, I fear my acquaintance with you is too short, to make that *lasting* impression on your heart I could wish.

SYLVANDER.

In her next letter, written apparently on Wednesday morning, the 16th of January, Clarinda speaks warmly of his power over her, and invites him to another evening visit on Saturday. She

asks him to walk, because a chair, being an unusual thing in her neighbourhood, might 'raise speculation.' He might, however, have a chair to take him home, because by ten o'clock the neighbours are all asleep. The lady, doubtless, meant well, but it is impossible to applaud either her prudence or her delicacy in encouraging visits which she felt would tell upon her reputation if they were discovered. It need not be insisted on, that the pure are under an obligation to society to maintain all the appearances as well as the reality of purity.

TO CLARINDA.

Sunday Night [*Jan.* 20].

The impertinence of fools has joined with a return of an old indisposition to make me good for nothing to-day. The paper has lain before me all this evening to write to my dear Clarinda; but

'Fools rushed on fools, as waves succeed to waves.'

I cursed them in my soul: they sacrilegiously disturb my meditations on her who holds my heart! What a creature is man! A little alarm last night and to-day that I am mortal, has made such a revolution in my spirits! There is no philosophy, no divinity, comes half so home to the mind. I have no idea of courage that braves Heaven. 'Tis the wild ravings of an imaginary hero in Bedlam. I can no more, Clarinda; I can scarce hold up my head; but I am happy you don't know it, you would be so uneasy.

SYLVANDER.

Monday Morning.

I am, my lovely friend, much better this morning, on the whole; but I have a horrid languor on my spirits—

'Sick of the world and all its joy,
My soul in pining sadness mourns;
Dark scenes of wo my mind employ,
The past and present in their turns.'

Have you ever met with a saying of the great and likewise good Mr Locke, author of the famous *Essay on the Human Understanding?* He wrote a letter to a friend, directing it 'Not to be delivered till after my decease.' It ended thus: 'I know you loved me when living, and will preserve my memory now I am dead. All the use to be made of it is—that this life affords no solid satisfaction, but in the consciousness of having done well, and the hopes of another life. Adieu! I leave my best wishes with you.—J. LOCKE.'

Clarinda, may I reckon on your friendship for life? I think I

may. Thou Almighty Preserver of men! Thy friendship, which hitherto I have too much neglected, to secure it shall all the future days and nights of my life be my steady care!—The idea of my Clarinda follows:—

> 'Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
> Where, mixed with God's, her loved idea lies.'

But I fear inconstancy, the consequent imperfection of human weakness. Shall I meet with a friendship that defies years of absence, and the chances and changes of fortune? Perhaps 'such things are.' *One* honest man I have great hopes from that way; but who, except a romance writer, would think on a *love* that could promise for life, in spite of distance, absence, chance, and change; and that, too, with slender hopes of fruition? For my own part, I can say to myself in both requisitions, 'Thou art the man!' I dare, in cool resolve, I dare declare myself that friend and that lover. If womankind is capable of such things, Clarinda is. I trust that she is: and feel I shall be miserable if she is not. There is not one virtue which gives worth, or one sentiment which does honour to the sex, that she does not possess superior to any woman I ever saw: her exalted mind, aided a little perhaps by her situation, is, I think, capable of that nobly romantic love-enthusiasm.

May I see you on Wednesday evening, my dear angel? The next Wednesday again will, I conjecture, be a hated day to us both. I tremble for censorious remarks for your sake; but in extraordinary cases, may not usual and useful precautions be a little dispensed with? Three evenings, three swift-winged evenings, with pinions of down, are all the past—I dare not calculate the future. I shall call at Miss Nimmo's to-morrow evening; 'twill be a farewell call.

I have written out my last sheet of paper, so I am reduced to my last half-sheet. What a strange, mysterious faculty is that thing called imagination! We have no ideas almost at all of another world; but I have often amused myself with visionary schemes of what happiness might be enjoyed by small alterations—alterations that we can fully enter to, in this present state of existence. For instance, suppose you and I just as we are at present—the same reasoning powers, sentiments, and even desires—the same fond curiosity for knowledge and remarking observation in our minds; and imagine our bodies free from pain, and the necessary supplies for the wants of nature at all times and easily within our reach; imagine further, that we were set free from the laws of gravitation which bind us to this globe, and could at pleasure fly, without inconvenience, through all the yet unconjectured bounds of creation—what a life of bliss should we lead in our mutual pursuit of virtue, and knowledge, and our mutual enjoyment of friendship and love!

I see you laughing at my fairy fancies, and calling me a voluptuous Mahometan; but I am certain I should be a happy creature, beyond anything we call bliss here below; nay, it would be a paradise

congenial to you too. Don't you see us hand in hand, or rather my arm about your lovely waist, making our remarks on Sirius, the nearest of the fixed stars; or surveying a comet flaming innoxious by us, as we just now would mark the passing pomp of a travelling monarch; or in a shady bower of Mercury or Venus, dedicating the hour to love in mutual converse, relying honour, and revelling endearment—while the most exalted strains of poesy and harmony would be the ready, spontaneous language of our souls! Devotion is the favourite employment of your heart, so is it of mine: what incentives then to, and powers for reverence, gratitude, faith, and hope, in all the fervours of adoration and praise to that Being whose unsearchable wisdom, power, and goodness, so pervaded, so inspired every sense and feeling! By this time, I daresay, you will be blessing the neglect of the maid that leaves me destitute of paper.

SYLVANDER.

During this month, while penning these strange ravings to a female bosom as impressionable as his own, he was endeavouring to bring his publisher Creech to a settlement of accounts. His sufferings under the uncertainty as to his prospects, his painful accident, a return of his nervous ailment, and reflections on the consequences of his many errors, seem to have brought him at times very low.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Now for that wayward, unfortunate thing, myself. I have broke measures with Creech, and last week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me upon his honour that I should have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor, damned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonising sensibility, and bedlam passions!

'I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to die!' I had lately 'a hairbreadth 'scape in th' imminent deadly breach' of love too. Thank my stars, I got off heart-whole, 'waur fleyed [worse frightened] than hurt.'—Interruption.

I have this moment got a hint. . . . . I fear I am something like—undone—but I hope for the best. Come stubborn Pride and unshrinking Resolution; accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! You must not desert me. Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching-regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn-hope. Seriously though, life presents me with but a melancholy path: but—my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on.

R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *January* 21, 1788.

After six weeks' confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission; for I would not take in any poor ignorant wretch by selling out. Lately I was a sixpenny private, and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign, a starving cadet—a little more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this; for though I do want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which will be, I suppose, about the middle of next week, I leave Edinburgh; and soon after I shall pay my grateful duty at Dunlop House. R. B.

The allusions in the letter to Miss Chalmers are said by Allan Cunningham to refer to whispers which had reached his ear about the solvency of Creech. Any such rumours I must suppose to have been ill-founded, as Mr Creech passed through a long career of business with all the appearances of uninterrupted prosperity.[1] But we may well suppose that, with no exact knowledge to the contrary, and tantalised by the apparently unreasonable delay of a settlement, Burns would receive the 'hint' as something like the knell of doom. Another vexation of this period referred to circumstances of a tenderer nature. The consequences of his renewed intimacy with Jean Armour were now becoming no longer concealable. Her father became aware of her condition with feelings which defied control. He would not allow her to remain under a roof which he thought disgraced by her presence. In

[1] A respectable Edinburgh bookseller, now in retirement—who was an *élève* of Mr Creech, but at a time subsequent to the appearance of Burns in Edinburgh—favours me with some memoranda as to the habits of the eminent publisher:—

'My friend, Mr Creech, was rather a tardy man of business, and paid little attention to it. Previous to my becoming his clerk, he had my friend, Mr Robert Miller, and several other respectable young men, to take care of his business. Being so much occupied with literary people, he seldom handled his own money. His clerk balanced the cash every night, and carried on *that* to next day. He had a *levée* in his house till twelve every day, attended by literary men and printers. Between twelve and one he came to the shop, where the same flow of company lasted till four, and then he left us, and we saw no more of him till next day. He was a very good-natured man, and was never known to prosecute any one for a debt.'

Mr Robert Miller, here mentioned, was the publisher of the first work of Scott—his translation of Bürger's Ballads. He sang several of Burns's songs with a felicity only to be equalled by that with which he recited some of Mr Creech's stories.

Burns's phrase: 'She was turned, literally turned out of doors;' and the hapless poet, confined with his bruised limb in St James's Square, had to write to a friend in the west to provide a shelter for her. It will be admitted that these were extraordinary circumstances under which to conduct his romantic correspondence with Clarinda.

Several of the biographers of Burns have needlessly aggravated his culpability at this crisis, while representing him as under a true, though not apparent, matrimonial bond to Jean. If Burns had had reason to believe himself not liberated from Jean, his even *thinking* of any other of the women whom he speaks of as possible objects of his addresses during his residence in Edinburgh, would of course have been an act of turpitude. There would have been scarcely less guilt in allowing Mrs M'Lehose to entertain even her faint hopes, dependent as they were upon a remote enough contingency. But the truth is, that Burns had every reason to believe himself at this time free of nuptial bonds. He had gone through a humiliating process at Mauchline to insure for Jean that liberation which she and her friends desired. Ecclesiastical authority had assured him of his bachelorhood. The world imputed to him no other condition, nor even the possibility of any claim of a connubial kind upon him being established. The person chiefly interested would, to all appearance, have been the last to think that, even after this her second pregnancy, she had any such claim upon Burns. It would now appear that all concerned were under a mistake with respect to the effect of the proceedings of April 1786, by which it was supposed that the private marriage of Burns and Jean was annulled. A marriage once formed, even in the most irregular manner, cannot be annulled otherwise than by a regular process of divorce. The names had been obliterated from the paper—under legal care, too, for Mr Robert Aiken had presided on the occasion—but the destruction of the evidence will not neutralise a marriage.[1] Other evidence might have afterwards been obtained by one of the parties against the other; in which case, a subsequent marriage of that other party to a different person would have been an act of bigamy. It now, of course, depended on the possibility of such evidence being obtained, whether Burns was liable, in the event of nuptials with another woman, to be prosecuted by Jean. And in a country where so little is required to constitute the evidence of a marriage, it might

[1] See Appendix, No. 13.

have been by no means difficult to re-establish his original matrimonial relation to that young person, and thus expose him to a heavy penalty if he should in the meantime have given his hand to another woman. All this may be allowed as the law of the case as now read from the authorities, or as fixed by some late decision; but the question, I apprehend, is as to the *bona fides* of Burns in the view he took of his separation from his mistress. The whole series of facts shews him absolved from his marriage tie, not merely with the consent, but at the express and urgent instance of the parties usually most concerned in keeping the man fixed to his engagement. It was, as we have seen, against his own will; and the consequences were bitterly bewailed by him. He was, moreover, but a rustic, not necessarily learned in the law; and when told by a lawyer, even of Mr Aiken's grade, that he must henceforth consider himself a free man, a person of his degree of information on such subjects was surely excusable in adopting the belief, and retaining it till his mind was enlightened by some superior authority. It does appear, indeed, that before the 3d of March 1788, Burns had found reason to fear that he might after all be liable, in the event of a second marriage, to trouble on account of Jean Armour, if she or any other person should feel interested in bringing evidence against him for the establishment of previous nuptials. But we are not yet come to that period. We are considering Burns's presumable belief in the case during 1787; and it is enough that no evidence exists to shew that he had *then* any reason for apprehension on the subject, or for regarding himself otherwise than as a man free to give his hand to whomsoever he chose.

Every biographer of Burns has felt this to be a painful part of his task. The question is before us, How is this bright-minded bard to live? He himself, we have seen, thought of a return to his original profession; but the period immediately following the close of the colonial war was a bad time for farming in Britain, and the poor poet could nowhere see a piece of land on which he might be tolerably sure to live and pay rent. If we throw ourselves back to the time, and join ideally in the consultations of the poet and his friends, we shall quickly see the difficulty there was of evoking a decent alternative from the chaos of plans by which he was surrounded. The government—the favour of the monarch—the sympathising interest of Henry Dundas, who with a warm Scotch heart, ruled as much as possible for the benefit of Scotland—had Burns any prospects there? Alas! he not only had

not paid court in high quarters, but, with his bardic recklessness, he had done somewhat to give offence: we have only to recall his published *Dream*, and his unpublished but not unknown lines on the Stirling window. Could Burns, with his previous habits, hope to succeed in any kind of commercial career? Need the question be answered? Could he, at nine-and-twenty, commence an education for any of those learned professions which his talents might have been fitted to adorn? Scarcely with any prospect of success. Was it possible for him to make a livelihood as a man of letters? Such feats were not common in those days, and probably the notion never once occurred to him or any of his friends. No one seems even to have imagined that the subscription volume was an experiment liable to be repeated. It was most desirable that some kind of official appointment should be procured for Burns, for there appeared to be no other opening; but what appointment of that nature could any of his friends secure for him? I suspect—painful as the conclusion is—that there really was not any one readily or at all available, except that of a common exciseman.

No one who admired his genius could fail to deprecate the idea; and many were the expressions of surprise which it gave rise to. 'What! make Burns an exciseman!' worthy, sympathising men would exclaim: 'Can they make no better of him than that?' Every one looked with reproach to 'They' for making Burns an exciseman, without feeling that, by default, he had his own share in the procedure. Certainly in dispensing any blame which we have to throw upon the age for its treatment of the illustrious phenomenon which had fallen into its hands, it would be most unreasonable to give an unusual share to the few who were instrumental in gaining him the appointment, as it happened that, where all were alike concerned, they alone had done any duty in the case.

After all, it is creditable to Burns that he took no high-flown views of his situation and pretensions, and was willing, for the preservation of his independence, to subdue himself to such a drudgery, since it appeared that no better course was open for him. The idea, as we have seen, was not new to his mind. It had been agitated at the crisis of his West India voyage, in the autumn of 1786. Perhaps even in earlier years, some hope had been entertained of his working himself out of a position of rustic toil by means of those slight acquirements in geometry, of which the groundwork had been laid at Kirkoswald school. Even now,

when he had tasted the sweets of distinction and of elegant life, he seems to have experienced far less difficulty in condescending to such a certain means of realising fifty pounds a year than we might have been entitled, by any consideration of his somewhat arrogant spirit, to expect. The idea seems from first to last to have been very much his own.

It was at this crisis that Burns's wishes regarding the Excise were gratified; at least to the extent of his being assured of an appointment, or enrolled on the list of expectant officers. According to Heron, he was immediately indebted for this favour to the kind-hearted surgeon who attended him for his bruised limb. Mr Alexander Wood, usually called, on account of his lengthy lanky figure, *Lang Sandy Wood,* was a man after Burns's own heart—kind, quaint, fond of children and animals: he even resembled the poet so specifically, as to have had at one time a pet sheep, which, like Burns's *Mailie,* 'trotted by him' through all the town on his professional visits—a trait of eccentricity that strongly recalls the simple, cordial days of our grandfathers. This universally popular, warm-hearted man no sooner became aware of the wishes of his poet-patient, for whose genius he had the usual share of admiration, than he exerted himself in recommending him to the Commissioners of Excise, and the enrolment followed.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

SIR—When I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole House, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakspeare, asked old Kent why he wished to be in his service, he answers: 'Because you have that in your face which I would fain call master.' For some such reason, sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I daresay, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of Excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronising friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with anything like business, except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted.

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner which I have lived to see throw a venerable

parent into the jaws of a jail; whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on it; may I, therefore, beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division—where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation? R. B.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

My Lord—I know your lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you; but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes, and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme, if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the Excise: I am told that your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the Commissioners; and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters, from destruction. There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude.

My brother's farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it; and after the assistance which I have given, and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds; and instead of seeking, what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age.

These, my lord, are my views: I have resolved from the maturest deliberation; and, now I am fixed, I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes; nor have I yet applied to anybody else. Indeed, my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the great who have honoured me with their countenance. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial; but to your lordship I have not only the honour, the comfort, but the pleasure of being your lordship's much obliged and deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

In his last letter to Clarinda, he had asked for a fourth interview. It had taken place on the night which we set down conjecturally

as that of Wednesday the 23d January, being the second last Wednesday which he thought he should spend in Edinburgh on the present occasion. At this meeting, it would appear, the communications of the pair had been of a more fervent and unreserved kind than heretofore, insomuch as to leave self-accusing reflections in the bosom of Clarinda. Each wrote a letter to the other next day.

TO CLARINDA.

Thursday Morning [*January* 24?]

'Unlavish Wisdom never works in vain.'

I have been tasking my reason, Clarinda, why a woman, who, for native genius, poignant wit, strength of mind, generous sincerity of soul, and the sweetest female tenderness, is without a peer, and whose personal charms have few, very, very few parallels, among her sex; why, or how she should fall to the blessed lot of a poor hairum-scairum poet, whom Fortune had kept for her particular use to wreak her temper on whenever she was in ill-humour. One time I conjectured, that as Fortune is the most capricious jade ever known, she may have taken, not a fit of remorse, but a paroxysm of whim, to raise the poor devil out of the mire, where he had so often and so conveniently served her as a stepping-stone, and given him the most glorious boon she ever had in her gift, merely for the maggot's sake, to see how his fool head and his fool heart will bear it. At other times I was vain enough to think that Nature, who has a great deal to say with Fortune, had given the coquettish goddess some such hint as—'Here is a paragon of female excellence, whose equal, in all my former compositions, I never was lucky enough to hit on, and despair of ever doing so again; you have cast her rather in the shades of life; there is a certain poet of my making; among your frolics, it would not be amiss to attach him to this master-piece of my hand, to give her that immortality among mankind, which no woman, of any age, ever more deserved, and which few rhymsters of this age are better able to confer.'

Evening, 9 *o'clock.*

I am here, absolutely unfit to finish my letter—pretty hearty after a bowl, which has been constantly plied since dinner till this moment. I have been with Mr Schetki,[1] the musician, and he has set the song finely. I have no distinct ideas of anything, but that I have drunk your health twice to-night, and that you are all my soul holds dear in this world.

SYLVANDER.

[1] Mr Schetki was a respectable German musician, settled in Edinburgh.

The song was—

A FAREWELL TO CLARINDA,

ON LEAVING EDINBURGH.

Clarinda, mistress of my soul,
  The measured time is run!
The wretch beneath the dreary pole
  So marks his latest sun.

To what dark cave of frozen night
  Shall poor Sylvander hie?
Deprived of thee, his life and light,
  The sun of all his joy.

We part—but, by these precious drops
  That fill thy lovely eyes!
No other light shall guide my steps
  Till thy bright beams arise.

She, the fair sun of all her sex,
  Has blest my glorious day;
And shall a glimmering planet fix
  My worship to its ray?

The letter of Clarinda expresses the distress of a pure-minded though loving woman, on having been betrayed into an equivocal situation. 'I am neither well nor happy to-day: my heart reproaches me for last night. If you wish Clarinda to regain her peace, determine against everything but what the strictest delicacy warrants. . . . . Do not be displeased,' she adds, 'when I tell you I wish our parting was over. At a distance, we shall retain the same heartfelt affection and interestedness in each other's concerns; but absence will mellow and restrain those violent heart-agitations which, if continued much longer, would unhinge my very soul, and render me unfit for the duties of life.'

TO CLARINDA.

[*Friday.*]

Clarinda, my life, you have wounded my soul. Can I think of your being unhappy, even though it be not described in your pathetic elegance of language, without being miserable? Clarinda, can I bear to be told from you that 'you will not see me to-morrow night—that you wish the hour of parting were come?' Do not let us impose on ourselves by sounds. * * * * * W[illegible] love,

talk to me in such strong terms; every word of which cuts me to the very soul? You know, a hint, the slightest signification of your wish, is to me a sacred command.

Be reconciled, my angel, to your God, yourself, and me; and I pledge you Sylvander's honour—an oath, I daresay, you will trust without reserve—that you shall never more have reason to complain of his conduct. Now, my love, do not wound our next meeting with any averted looks. * * * I have marked the line of conduct—a line, I know, exactly to your taste—and which I will inviolably keep; but do not you shew the least inclination to make boundaries. Seeming distrust, where you know you may confide, is a cruel sin against sensibility.

'Delicacy, you know, it was which won me to you at once: take care you do not loosen the dearest, most sacred tie that unites us.' Clarinda, I would not have stung *your* soul—I would not have bruised *your* spirit, as that harsh, crucifying 'Take care' did *mine;* no, not to have gained heaven! Let me again appeal to your dear self, if Sylvander, even when he seemingly half transgressed the laws of decorum, if he did not shew more chastised, trembling, faltering delicacy, than the many of the world do in keeping these laws?

Oh Love and Sensibility, ye have conspired against my Peace! I love to madness, and I feel to torture! Clarinda, how can I forgive myself, that I have ever touched a single chord in your bosom with pain! Would I do it willingly? Would any consideration, any gratification, make me do so? Oh, did you love like me, you would not, you could not, deny or put off a meeting with the man who adores you; who would die a thousand deaths before he would injure you; and who must soon bid you a long farewell!

I had proposed bringing my bosom-friend, Mr Ainslie, to-morrow evening, at his strong request, to see you; as he has only time to stay with us about ten minutes, for an engagement. But I shall hear from you: this afternoon, for mercy's sake!—for, till I hear from you, I am wretched. Oh Clarinda, the tie that binds me to thee is intwisted, incorporated with my dearest threads of life!

SYLVANDER.

Another interview took place, and another letter had passed from Clarinda to Sylvander. Then we have a brief note from Sylvander

TO CLARINDA.

I was on the way, my love, to meet you (I never do things by halves) when I got your card. Mr Ainslie goes out of town to-morrow morning, to see a brother of his, who is newly arrived from France. I am determined that he and I shall call on you together.

So look you, lest I should never see to-morrow, we will call on you to-night. Mary[1] and you may put off tea till about seven, at which time, in the Galloway phrase, 'an the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale,' expect the humblest of your humble servants, and his dearest friend. We only propose staying half an hour—'for ought we ken.' I could suffer the lash of misery eleven months in the year, were the twelfth to be composed of hours like yesternight. You are the soul of my enjoyment—all else is of the stuff of stocks and stones! SYLVANDER.

In his next letter, we have a new turn given to his feelings regarding the Excise scheme:

TO CLARINDA.

Sunday Noon.

I have almost given up the Excise idea. I have been just now to wait on a great person, Miss ——'s friend, ——. Why will great people not only deafen us with the din of their equipage, and dazzle us with their fastidious pomp, but they must also be so very dictatorially wise? I have been questioned like a child about my matters, and blamed and schooled for my inscription on the Stirling window. Come, Clarinda!—'Come, curse me, Jacob; come, defy me, Israel!'

Sunday Night.

I have been with Miss Nimmo. She is indeed 'a good soul,' as my Clarinda finely says. She has reconciled me, in a good measure, to the world with her friendly prattle.

Schetki has sent me the song, set to a fine air of his composing. I have called the song Clarinda: I have carried it about in my pocket and hummed it over all day.

Monday Morning.

If my prayers have any weight in heaven, this morning looks in on you and finds you in the arms of peace, except where it is charmingly interrupted by the ardours of devotion. I find so much serenity of mind, so much positive pleasure, so much fearless daring toward the world, when I warm in devotion, or feel the glorious sensation—a consciousness of Almighty friendship—that I am sure I shall soon be an honest enthusiast.

'How are thy servants blest, O Lord!
How sure is their defence!
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help, Omnipotence!'

I am, my dear madam, yours, SYLVANDER.

[1] Miss Mary Peacock, a young friend of Clarinda, afterwards married to Mr James Gray, of the Edinburgh High School—a woman of literary talent, and most enthusiastic interest in all who blacked paper.

On the same day Clarinda was writing to him in equal tenderness, but with self-accusation. She had disclosed the state of her heart to her pastor, Mr Kemp, who had expressed much sympathy. She adds a remarkable passage: 'Sylvander, I believe nothing were a more impracticable task, than to make you feel a little of genuine gospel humility. Believe me, I wish not to see you deprived of that noble fire of an exalted mind which you eminently possess. Yet a sense of your faults—a feeling sense of them!—were devoutly to be wished.' She is scarcely sorry at the Excise affair misgiving, for he will be better out of Edinburgh, so full of temptation to one of his social turn. 'Providence, if you will be wise in future, will order something better for you. I am half glad you were schooled about the inscription; 'twill be a lesson, I hope, in future. Clarinda would have lectured you on it before, *if she dared.*'

Another Saturday-evening interview, followed, as usual, by a letter.

TO CLARINDA.

Sunday Morning.

Yesternight I was happy—happiness that the world cannot give. I kindle at the recollection; but it is a flame where Innocence looks smiling on, and Honour stands by, a sacred guard.

You are an angel, Clarinda; you are surely no mortal that 'the earth owns.' To kiss your hand, to live on your smile, is to me far more exquisite bliss than the dearest favours that the fairest of the sex, yourself excepted, can bestow.

Sunday Evening.

You are the constant companion of my thoughts. How wretched is the condition of one who is haunted with conscious guilt, and trembling under the idea of dreaded vengeance! and what a placid calm, what a charming secret enjoyment it gives, to bosom the kind feelings of friendship and the fond throes of love! Out upon the tempest of Anger, the acrimonious gall of fretful Impatience, the sullen frost of louring Resentment, or the corroding poison of withered Envy! They eat up the immortal part of man! If they spent their fury only on the unfortunate objects of them, it would be something in their favour; but these miserable passions, like traitor Iscariot, betray their lord and master.

Thou Almighty author of peace, and goodness, and love, do thou give me the social heart that kindly tastes of every man's cup! Is it a draught of joy?—warm and open my heart to share it with cordial unenvying rejoicing! Is it the bitter potion of sorrow?—melt my heart with sincerely sympathetic wo! Above all, do Thou give me the manly mind, that resolutely exemplifies, in life and

manners, those sentiments which I would wish to be thought to possess! The friend of my soul; there may I never deviate from the firmest fidelity and most active kindness! Clarinda, the dear object of my fondest love; there may the most sacred inviolate honour, the most faithful kindling constancy, ever watch and animate my every thought and imagination!

Did you ever meet with the following lines spoken of religion—your darling topic?—

> ''*Tis this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
> '*Tis this* that gilds the horrors of our night;
> When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few,
> When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
> 'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
> Disarms affliction, or repels its dart:
> Within the breast bids purest rapture rise,
> Bids smiling Conscience spread her cloudless skies.'

I met with these verses very early in life, and was so delighted with them, that I have them by me, copied at school.

Good-night and sound rest, my dearest Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

In the reply there are some affecting passages. She bewails having been formed susceptible of emotions which she cannot indulge. 'Never were there two hearts formed so exactly alike as ours.' They must part; and she shudders at the idea of a hundred miles of distance. 'Oh, let the scenes of nature remind you of Clarinda! In Winter, remember the dark shades of her fate; in Summer, the warmth of her friendship; in Autumn, her glowing wishes to bestow plenty on all; and let Spring animate you with hopes, that your friend may yet surmount the wintry blasts of life, and revive to taste a spring-time of happiness. At all events, Sylvander, the storms of life will quickly pass, and "one unbounded spring encircle all." Love, there, is not a crime. I charge you to meet me there. Oh God! I must lay down my pen.' I have heard Clarinda, at seventy-five, express the same hope to meet in another sphere the one heart that she had ever found herself able entirely to sympathise with, but which had been divided from her on earth by such pitiless obstacles.

TO CLARINDA.

Thursday Night.

I cannot be easy, my Clarinda, while any sentiment respecting me in your bosom gives me pain. If there is no man on earth

to whom your heart and affections are justly due, it may savour of imprudence, but never of criminality, to bestow that heart and those affections where you please. The God of love meant and made those delicious attachments to be bestowed on somebody; and even all the imprudence lies in bestowing them on an unworthy object. If this reasoning is conclusive, as it certainly is, I must be allowed to 'talk of Love.'

It is, perhaps, rather wrong to speak highly to a friend of his letter: it is apt to lay one under a little restraint in their future letters, and restraint is the death of a friendly epistle; but there is one passage in your last charming letter, Thomson or Shenstone never exceeded it, nor often came up to it. I shall certainly steal it, and set it in some future poetic production, and get immortal fame by it. 'Tis when you bid the scenes of nature remind me of Clarinda. Can I forget you, Clarinda? I would detest myself as a tasteless, unfeeling, insipid, infamous blockhead! I have loved women of ordinary merit, whom I could have loved for ever. You are the first, the only unexceptionable individual of the beauteous sex that I ever met with; and never woman more entirely possessed my soul! I know myself, and how far I can depend on Passion's swell. It has been my peculiar study.

I thank you for going to Miers. Urge him, for necessity calls, to have it done by the middle of next week: Wednesday the latest day. I want it for a breast-pin, to wear next my heart. I propose to keep sacred set times, to wander in the woods and wilds for meditation on you. Then, and only then, your lovely image shall be produced to the day, with a reverence akin to devotion.

* * * *

To-morrow night shall not be the last. Good-night! I am perfectly stupid, as I supped late yesternight.

SYLVANDER.

While pining on his couch in St James's Square, groaning at fortune, and penning epistolary ravings to the goddess of the Potterrow, he was not neglectful of Johnson's collection of Scottish songs. The second volume of this work was proceeding rapidly to completion, chiefly indebted to him for materials, both music and poetry; while with him also originated a new feature of the work, in notes announcing such facts regarding the authorship and subjects of the old songs as could be obtained from tradition. Of the songs which he contributed to the volume, some were given with his name; a few others that were wholly, and some that were partially his, appeared anonymously. We find, in the second

volume, besides the songs already here given, the following acknowledged contributions:—

WHISTLE AND I'LL COME TO YE, MY LAD.

Oh whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,
Oh whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad;
Though father and mother and a' should gae mad,
Oh whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad.

Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me,
Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me,
Come down the back stairs, and let naebody see;
And come as ye were na coming to me.[1]

MACPHERSON'S FAREWELL.

TUNE—*M'Pherson's Rant.*

[James Macpherson was a noted Highland freebooter, of uncommon personal strength, and an excellent performer on the violin. After holding the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray, in fear for some years, he was seized by Duff of Braco, ancestor of the Earl of Fife, and tried before the sheriff of Banffshire (November 7, 1700), along with certain gipsies who had been taken in his company. In the prison, while he lay under sentence of death, he composed a song and an appropriate air, the former commencing thus:—

'I've spent my time in rioting,
Debauched my health and strength;
I squandered fast as pillage came,
And fell to shame at length.
But dantonly, and wantonly,
And rantingly I'll gae;
I'll play a tune, and dance it roun'
Beneath the gallows-tree.'

When brought to the place of execution, on the Gallows-hill of Banff (Nov. 16), he played the tune on his violin, and then asked if any friend was present who would accept the instrument as a gift at his hands. No one coming forward, he indignantly broke the violin on his knee, and threw away the fragments; after which he submitted to his fate. The traditionary accounts of Macpherson's immense prowess are justified by his sword, which is still preserved in Duff House, at Banff, and is an implement of great length and weight—as well as by his bones, which were found a few years ago, and were allowed by all who saw them to be much stronger than the bones of ordinary men.

The verses of Burns—justly called by Mr Lockhart 'a grand lyric'—were designed as an improvement on those of the freebooter, preserving the same air. In the edition of the poet's works superintended by Messrs Hogg and Motherwell (Glasgow, 1834), the reader will find ampler information on the subject of Macpherson and his 'Rant.']

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie!
Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows-tree.
Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He played a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows-tree.

[1] Burns afterwards altered and extended this song.

Oh, what is Death but parting breath?
  On many a bloody plain
I 've dared his face, and in this place
  I scorn him yet again!

Untie these bands from off my hands,
  And bring to me my sword;
And there 's no a man in all Scotland
  But I 'll brave him at a word.

I 've lived a life of sturt and strife;
  I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart,
  And not avenged be.

Now farewell light—thou sunshine bright,
  And all beneath the sky!
May coward shame distain his name,
  The wretch that dares not die!

STAY, MY CHARMER.

Tune—An Gille dubh ciar dhubh.

Stay, my charmer, can you leave me?
Cruel, cruel to deceive me!
Well you know how much you grieve me;
  Cruel charmer, can you go?
  Cruel charmer, can you go?

By my love so ill requited,
By the faith you fondly plighted,
By the pangs of lovers slighted,
  Do not, do not leave me so!
  Do not, do not leave me so!

STRATHALLAN'S LAMENT.

[The individual here meant is William, fourth Viscount of Strathallan, who fell on the insurgent side at the battle of Culloden, April 1746. Burns, probably ignorant of his real fate, describes him as having survived the action, and taken refuge from the fury of the government forces in a Highland fastness.]

Thickest night, o'erhang my dwelling!
  Howling tempests, o'er me rave!
Turbid torrents, wintry swelling,
  Still surround my lonely cave![1]

[1] Variation in MS. in possession of Mr B. Nightingale, Priory Road, London:—

'Thickest night, surround my dwelling!
  Howling tempests, o'er me rave!
Turbid torrents, wintry swelling,
  Roaring by my lonely cave!'

Crystal streamlets gently flowing,
  Busy haunts of base mankind,
Western breezes softly blowing,
  Suit not my distracted mind.

In the cause of right engagèd,
  Wrongs injurious to redress,
Honour's war we strongly wagèd,
  But the heavens denied success.

Ruin's wheel has driven o'er us,
  Not a hope that dare attend:
The wide world is all before us—
  But a world without a friend!

THE YOUNG HIGHLAND ROVER.

TUNE—*Morag.*

Loud blaw the frosty breezes,
  The snaws the mountains cover;
Like winter on me seizes,
  Since my young Highland Rover[1]
  Far wanders nations over.
Where'er he go, where'er he stray,
  May Heaven be his warden,
Return him safe to fair Strathspey,
  And bonny Castle-Gordon!

The trees now naked groaning,
  Soon shall wi' leaves be hinging,
The birdies dowie moaning,
  Shall a' be blithely singing,
  And every flower be springing.
Sae I'll rejoice the lee-lang day,
  When by his mighty warden
My youth's returned to fair Strathspey,
  And bonny Castle-Gordon.

RAVING WINDS AROUND HER BLOWING.

TUNE—*Macgregor of Ruara's Lament.*

['I composed these verses on Miss Isabella M'Leod of Raasay, alluding to her feelings on the death of her sister, and the still more melancholy death (1786) of her sister's husband, the late Earl of Loudon, who shot himself out of sheer heart-break at some mortifications he suffered owing to the deranged state of his finances.'—*B.*]

Raving winds around her blowing,
Yellow leaves the woodlands strowing,
By a river hoarsely roaring,
Isabella strayed deploring:

[1] The Highland Rover is evidently meant for Prince Charles Stuart.

'Farewell hours that late did measure
Sunshine days of joy and pleasure;
Hail, thou gloomy night of sorrow,
Cheerless night that knows no morrow!

O'er the past too fondly wandering,
On the hopeless future pondering;
Chilly Grief my life-blood freezes,
Fell Despair my fancy seizes.
Life, thou soul of every blessing,
Load to Misery most distressing,
Gladly how would I resign thee,
And to dark oblivion join thee!'

MUSING ON THE ROARING OCEAN.

TUNE—*Druimion Dubh.*

['I composed these verses out of compliment to a Mrs Maclachlan, whose husband is an officer in the East Indies.'—*B.*]

Musing on the roaring ocean,
  Which divides my love and me;
Wearying Heaven in warm devotion,
  For his weal where'er he be.

Hope and Fear's alternate billow
  Yielding late to Nature's law,
Whisp'ring spirits round my pillow
  Talk of him that 's far awa'.

Ye whom sorrow never wounded,
  Ye who never shed a tear,
Care-untroubled, joy-surrounded,
  Gaudy Day to you is dear.

Gentle Night, do thou befriend me,
  Downy Sleep, the curtain draw;
Spirits kind, again attend me,
  Talk of him that 's far awa'!

BONNY PEGGY ALISON.

TUNE—*Braes o' Balquhidder.*

CHORUS.

I 'll kiss thee yet, yet,
  And I 'll kiss thee o'er again,
And I 'll kiss thee yet, yet,
  My bonny Peggy Alison!

Ilk care and fear, when thou art near,
  I ever mair defy them, O!
Young kings upon their hansel throne
  Are no sae blest as I am, O!

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
  I clasp my countless treasure, O,
I seek nae mair o' heaven to share
  Than sic a moment's pleasure, O!

And by thy e'en, sae bonny blue,
  I swear I 'm thine for ever, O!—
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
  And break it shall I never, O!

In Gilbert Burns's memoranda of heroines, communicated to Mr George Thomson, there occurs a somewhat obscure note opposite the song of *Mary Morison*:—'Mary Morison was the heroine of some old light verses, beginning, "I'll kiss thee yet, yet." Burns is not supposed to have had any particular person in view.' Mrs Begg considers this song as an old one which her brother had only repaired. Mr William Douglas, whose expiscation of the mysterious story of Highland Mary entitles him to be heard with respect on any subject connected with Burns, is strongly of opinion that both *Mary Morison* and *Bonny Peggy Alison* refer to Ellison Begbie, the poet's early sweetheart, whose rejection of him just before his going to Irvine caused him so much discomfiture during that period of his life. Mr Douglas points out that Ellison Begbie was a name unmanageable in verse, and which indeed no poet could have adopted. He thinks that Burns, by an inversion and slight change of the actual name, produced the euphonious one, Peggy Alison, and may have also meant Mary Morison as a substitute for the same loved but harsh appellative. Certainly there is an appearance of earnestness in the above song, which speaks strongly for its being the expression of some such passion as that which the poet bore for Ellison Begbie; and the note of Gilbert Burns, so far as any meaning can be attached to it, seems to denote some connection between the two songs in his mind.[1]

The volume also contains the song, *Talk not of love, it gives me*

[1] 'It appears that this song was a great favourite of Mr Stephen Clarke; for at the bottom of the manuscript music-sheet where this tune is inserted with its base, there is a note in his handwriting, in which he says: "I am charmed with this song *almost* as much as the lover is with *Bonny Peggy Alison*.—S. C."'—*Stenhouse's Illustrations of Johnson's Museum.*

pain, 'by a lady,' with the improvements effected by Burns, and set to the tune of *Banks of Spey.* At the bottom is the signature M. With the same signature appeared a canzonet, *To a Blackbird.*

Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy tuneful notes will hush despair;
Thy plaintive warblings, void of art,
Thrill sweetly through my aching heart.
Now choose thy mate, and fondly love,
And all the charming transport prove,
While I a love-lorn exile live,
Nor transport or receive or give.

For thee is laughing Nature gay,
For thee she pours the vernal day:
For me in vain is Nature dressed,
While joy 's a stranger to my breast.
These sweet emotions all enjoy,
Let Love and Song thy hours employ;
Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy tuneful notes will hush despair.

This was an improvement by Burns upon a few verses which Clarinda had composed—her first—in consequence of hearing a blackbird singing while she was walking with one of her children at the head of Bruntsfield Links. The ideas, she used to say, came into her mind like an inspiration—

'Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy cheerful notes will hush despair;
Thy tuneful warblings, void of art,
Thrill sweetly through my aching heart.
Now choose thy mate, and fondly love,
And all the charming transport prove;
Those sweet emotions all enjoy,
Let Love and Song thy hours employ;
Whilst I, a love-lorn exile, live,
And rapture nor receive nor give.
Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy cheerful notes will hush despair.'

The volume, which was published on the 14th of February,[1] contained a preface, of which one or two sentences betray the hand of Burns. 'Wherever the old words could be recovered, they have been preserved, both as generally suiting better the genius of the tunes, and to preserve the productions of those

[1] Burns says so himself in a letter to Mr Skinner of that date. The volume is advertised on the 20th of February as 'published this day,' and the preface is somewhat awkwardly dated 'March 1st.'

earlier sons of the Scottish Muses, some of whose names deserved a better fate than has befallen them—"Buried 'midst the wreck of things that were." . . . Ignorance and Prejudice may perhaps sneer at the simplicity of the poetry and music of some of these pieces; but their having been for ages the favourite of Nature's Judges—the Common People—was to the editor a sufficient test of their merit.'

In her next letter, Clarinda gave an ample disclosure of her religious views. She is for the religion of the bosom, but believes that redemption is through Christ's atonement alone.

TO CLARINDA.

Saturday Morning.

There is no time, my Clarinda, when the conscious thrilling chords of love and friendship give such delight, as in the pensive hours of what our favourite Thomson calls 'philosophic melancholy.' The sportive insects, who bask in the sunshine of prosperity, or the worms, that luxuriant crawl amid their ample wealth of earth; they need no Clarinda—they would despise Sylvander, if they dared. The family of Misfortune, a numerous group of brothers and sisters! they need a resting-place to their souls. Unnoticed, often condemned by the world—in some degree, perhaps, condemned by themselves—they feel the full enjoyment of ardent love, delicate tender endearments, mutual esteem, and mutual reliance.

In this light I have often admired religion. In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a compassionate Deity, an Almighty Protector, are doubly dear.

> 'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
> 'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.'

I have been this morning taking a peep through, as Young finely says, 'the dark postern of time long elapsed;' and you will easily guess 'twas a rueful prospect. What a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly! My life reminded me of a ruined temple: what strength, what proportion in some parts!—what unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others! I kneeled down before the Father of Mercies, and said: 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son!' I rose, eased and strengthened. I despise the superstition of a fanatic, but I love the religion of a man. 'The future,' said I to myself, 'is still before me; there let me

> "On reason build resolve—
> That column of true majesty in man!"

I have difficulties many to encounter,' said I; 'but they are not

absolutely insuperable: and where is firmness of mind shewn but in exertion? Mere declamation is bombast rant. Besides, wherever I am, or in whatever situation I may be,

——"'Tis nought to me,
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full;
And where he vital breathes, there must be joy."'

Saturday Night, half after Ten.

What luxury of bliss I was enjoying this time yesternight! My ever dearest Clarinda, you have stolen away my soul: but you have refined, you have exalted it; you have given it a stronger sense of virtue, and a stronger relish for piety. Clarinda, first of your sex! if ever I am the veriest wretch on earth to forget you—if ever your lovely image is effaced from my soul—

'May I be lost, no eye to weep my end,
And find no earth that 's base enough to bury me!'

What trifling silliness is the childish fondness of the everyday children of the world! 'Tis the unmeaning toying of the younglings of the fields and forests; but where sentiment and fancy unite their sweets, where taste and delicacy refine, where wit adds the flavour, and good sense gives strength and spirit to all, what a delicious draught is the hour of tender endearment! * * *

TO CLARINDA.

* * * I am a discontented ghost, a perturbed spirit. Clarinda, if ever you forget Sylvander, may you be happy, but he will be miserable.

Oh what a fool I am in love! what an extravagant prodigal of affection! Why are your sex called the tender sex, when I never have met with one who can repay me in passion? They are either not so rich in love as I am, or they are niggards where I am lavish.

O Thou, whose I am, and whose are all my ways! Thou see'st me here, the hapless wreck of tides and tempests in my own bosom: do Thou direct to thyself that ardent love, for which I have so often sought a return in vain from my fellow-creatures! If Thy goodness has yet such a gift in store for me as an equal return of affection from her who, Thou knowest, is dearer to me than life, do Thou bless and hallow our band of love and friendship; watch over us, in all our outgoings and incomings for good; and may the tie that unites our hearts be strong and indissoluble as the thread of man's immortal life!

I am just going to take your Blackbird, the sweetest, I am sure, that ever sung, and prune its wings a little. SYLVANDER.

TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Morning.

I cannot go out to-day, my dearest love, without sending you half a line by way of a sin-offering; but, believe me, 'twas the sin of ignorance. Could you think that I intended to hurt you by anything I said yesternight? Nature has been too kind to you for your happiness, your delicacy, your sensibility. Oh why should such glorious qualifications be the fruitful source of wo! You have 'murdered sleep' to me last night. I went to bed impressed with an idea that you were unhappy; and every start I closed my eyes, busy Fancy painted you in such scenes of romantic misery, that I would almost be persuaded you are not well this morning.

———'If I, unwitting, have offended,
Impute it not;'
———'But while we live
But one short hour, perhaps, between us two
Let there be peace.'

If Mary is not gone by the time this reaches you, give her my best compliments. She is a charming girl, and highly worthy of the noblest love.

I send you a poem to read till I call on you this night, which will be about nine. I wish I could procure some potent spell, some fairy charm, that would protect from injury, or restore to rest, that bosom chord, 'tremblingly alive all o'er,' on which hangs your peace of mind. I thought—vainly, I fear, thought—that the devotion of love—love strong as even you can feel, love guarded, invulnerably guarded by all the purity of virtue, and all the pride of honour—I thought such a love might make you happy. Shall I be mistaken? I can no more, for hurry.

An interview had taken place in the presence of Miss Peacock, who, after the departure of the poet, spoke of him with rapturous admiration. Clarinda tells Sylvander that she delighted to hear him so spoken of; but she knows how much violent admiration is akin to love.

TO CLARINDA.

Friday Morning, 7 o'clock.

Your fears for Mary are truly laughable. I suppose, my love, you and I shewed her a scene which, perhaps, made her wish that she had a swain, and one who could love like me; and 'tis a thousand pities that so good a heart as hers should want an aim—an object. I am miserably stupid this morning. Yesterday I dined with a baronet, and sat pretty late over the bottle. And 'who hath wo—who hath sorrow? they that tarry long at the wine; they that

go to seek mixed wine.' Forgive me, likewise, a quotation from my favourite author. Solomon's knowledge of the world is very great. He may be looked on as the 'Spectator' or 'Adventurer' of his day: and it is, indeed, surprising what a sameness has ever been in human nature. The broken, but strongly characterising, hints that the royal author gives us of the manners of the court of Jerusalem and country of Israel are, in their great outlines, the same pictures that London and England, Versailles and France, exhibit some three thousand years later. The loves in the 'Song of Songs' are all in the spirit of Lady M. W. Montagu, or Madame Ninon de l'Enclos; though, for my part, I dislike both the ancient and modern voluptuaries; and will dare to affirm, that such an attachment as mine to Clarinda, and such evenings as she and I have spent, are what these greatly respectable and deeply experienced judges of life and love never dreamed of.

I shall be with you this evening between eight and nine, and shall keep as sober hours as you could wish. I am ever, my dear madam, yours, SYLVANDER.

Five letters of Burns to Clarinda follow, without her answers, which have been lost. It appears that the fears of the lady for the remarks of friends and neighbours had at length been realised.

TO CLARINDA.

MY EVER DEAREST CLARINDA—I make a numerous dinner-party wait me while I read yours and write this. Do not require that I should cease to love you, to adore you in my soul; 'tis to me impossible: your peace and happiness are to me dearer than my soul. Name the terms on which you wish to see me, to correspond with me, and you have them. I must love, pine, mourn, and adore in secret: this you must not deny me. You will ever be to me

> 'Dear as the light that visits those sad eyes,
> Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart.'

I have not patience to read the Puritanic scrawl. Damned sophistry! Ye heavens, thou God of nature, thou Redeemer of mankind! ye look down with approving eyes on a passion inspired by the purest flame, and guarded by truth, delicacy, and honour; but the half-inch soul of an unfeeling, cold-blooded, pitiful Presbyterian bigot cannot forgive anything above his dungeon-bosom and foggy head.

Farewell! I'll be with you to-morrow evening; and be at rest in your mind. I will be yours in the way you think most to your happiness. I dare not proceed. I love, and will love you; and will, with joyous confidence, approach the throne of the Almighty Judge of men with your dear idea, and will despise the scum of sentiment and the mist of sophistry. SYLVANDER.

TO CLARINDA.

Wednesday, Midnight.

MADAM—After a wretched day, I am preparing for a sleepless night. I am going to address myself to the Almighty Witness of my actions—some time, perhaps very soon, my Almighty Judge. I am not going to be the advocate of Passion: be Thou my inspirer and testimony, O God, as I plead the cause of truth!

I have read over your friend's haughty dictatorial letter: you are only answerable to your God in such a matter. Who gave any fellow-creature of yours (a fellow-creature incapable of being your judge, because not your peer) a right to catechise, scold, undervalue, abuse, and insult, wantonly and inhumanly to insult, you thus? I don't wish, not even wish, to deceive you, madam. The Searcher of Hearts is my witness how dear you are to me; but though it were possible you could be still dearer to me, I would not even kiss your hand at the expense of your conscience. Away with declamation! let us appeal to the bar of common sense. It is not mouthing everything sacred—it is not vague ranting assertions—it is not assuming, haughtily and insultingly assuming, the dictatorial language of a Roman pontiff—that must dissolve a union like ours. Tell me, madam, are you under the least shadow of an obligation to bestow your love, tenderness, caresses, affections, heart and soul, on Mr M'Lehose—the man who has repeatedly, habitually, and barbarously broken through every tie of duty, nature, or gratitude to you? The laws of your country, indeed, for the most useful reasons of policy and sound government, have made your person inviolate; but are your heart and affections bound to one who gives not the least return of either to you? You cannot do it; it is not in the nature of things that you are bound to do it; the common feelings of humanity forbid it. Have you, then, a heart and affections which are no man's right? You have. It would be highly, ridiculously absurd to suppose the contrary. Tell me, then, in the name of common sense, can it be wrong, is such a supposition compatible with the plainest ideas of right and wrong, that it is improper to bestow the heart and these affections on another—while that bestowing is not in the smallest degree hurtful to your duty to God, to your children, to yourself, or to society at large?

This is the great test; the consequences: let us see them. In a widowed, forlorn, lonely situation, with a bosom glowing with love and tenderness, yet so delicately situated that you cannot indulge these nobler feelings except you meet with a man who has a soul capable . . . . . .

TO CLARINDA.

'I am distressed for thee, my brother, Jonathan.' I have suffered, Clarinda, from your letter. My soul was in arms at the sad perusal. I dreaded that I had acted wrong. If I have

wronged you, God forgive me. But, Clarinda, be comforted. Let us raise the tone of our feelings a little higher and bolder. A fellow-creature who leaves us—who spurns us without just cause, though once our bosom-friend—up with a little honest pride: let him go! How shall I comfort you, who am the cause of the injury? Can I wish that I had never seen you—that we had never met? No; I never will. But have I thrown you friendless?—there is almost distraction in the thought. Father of mercies! against Thee often have I sinned; through Thy grace I will endeavour to do so no more. She who Thou knowest is dearer to me than myself—pour Thou the balm of peace into her past wounds, and hedge her about with Thy peculiar care, all her future days and nights. Strengthen her tender, noble mind firmly to suffer, and magnanimously to bear. Make me worthy of that friendship, that love she honours me with. May my attachment to her be pure as devotion, and lasting as immortal life! O, Almighty Goodness, hear me! Be to her at all times, particularly in the hour of distress or trial, a friend and comforter, a guide and guard.

'How are thy servants blest, O Lord!
How sure is their defence!
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence.

Forgive me, Clarinda, the injury I have done you. To-night I shall be with you, as, indeed, I shall be ill at ease till I see you.

SYLVANDER.

TO CLARINDA.

Two o'clock.

I just now received your first letter of yesterday, by the careless negligence of the penny-post. Clarinda, matters are grown very serious with us; then seriously hear me, and hear me, Heaven—I met you, my dear . . . . . ., by far the first of womankind, at least to me; I esteemed, I loved you at first sight; the longer I am acquainted with you, the more innate amiableness and worth I discover in you. You have suffered a loss, I confess, for my sake: but if the firmest, steadiest, warmest friendship—if every endeavour to be worthy of your friendship—if a love, strong as the ties of nature, and holy as the duties of religion—if all these can make anything like a compensation for the evil I have occasioned you, if they be worth your acceptance, or can in the least add to your enjoyments—so help Sylvander, ye Powers above, in his hour of need, as he freely gives these all to Clarinda!

I esteem you, I love you as a friend; I admire you, I love you as a woman, beyond any one in all the circle of creation: I know I shall continue to esteem you, to love you, to pray for you—nay, to pray for myself for your sake.

Expect me at eight; and believe me to be ever, my dearest madam, yours most entirely, SYLVANDER.

TO CLARINDA.

When matters, my love, are desperate, we must put on a desperate face—

> 'On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man;'

or, as the same author finely says in another place—

> 'Let thy soul spring up,
> And lay strong hold for help on Him that made thee.'

I am yours, Clarinda, for life. Never be discouraged at all this. Look forward: in a few weeks I shall be somewhere or other, out of the possibility of seeing you: till then, I shall write you often, but visit you seldom. Your fame, your welfare, your happiness are dearer to me than any gratification whatever. Be comforted, my love! The present moment is the worst; the lenient hand of Time is daily and hourly either lightening the burden, or making us insensible to the weight. None of these friends—I mean Mr —— and the other gentleman—can hurt your worldly support; and of their friendship, in a little time you will learn to be easy, and by and by to be happy without it. A decent means of livelihood in the world, an approving God, a peaceful conscience, and one firm trusty friend—can anybody that has these be said to be unhappy? These are yours.

To-morrow evening I shall be with you about eight, probably for the last time till I return to Edinburgh. In the meantime, should any of these two unlucky friends question you respecting me, whether I am *the man*, I do not think they are entitled to any information. As to their jealousy and spying, I despise them. Adieu, my dearest madam! SYLVANDER.

While the time was thus drawing nigh for his leaving Edinburgh, he found time to pen a few letters to other friends.

TO MR JAMES CANDLISH.

[EDINBURGH, 1788.]

MY DEAR FRIEND—If once I were gone from this scene of hurry and dissipation, I promise myself the pleasure of that correspondence being renewed which has been so long broken. At present I have time for nothing. Dissipation and business engross every moment. I am engaged in assisting an honest Scotch enthusiast,[1] a friend of mine, who is an engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste. I have

[1] Mr Johnson, publisher of the *Scots Musical Museum*.

collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen, all the songs I could meet with. *Pompey's Ghost,* words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number—the first is already published. I shall shew you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a fortnight or less. Do be so kind as to send me the song in a day or two—you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

Direct to me at Mr W. Cruikshank's, St James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh. R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *February* 12, 1788.

Some things in your late letters hurt me: not that *you say them,* but that *you mistake me.* Religion, my honoured madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. I have, indeed, been the luckless victim of wayward follies; but, alas! I have ever been 'more fool than knave.' A mathematician without religion is a probable character; an irreligious poet is a monster. R. B.

TO THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

EDINBURGH, 14*th February* 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—I have been a cripple now near three months, though I am getting vastly better, and have been very much hurried besides, or else I would have wrote you sooner. I must beg your pardon for the epistle you sent me appearing in the magazine. I had given a copy or two to some of my intimate friends, but did not know of the printing of it till the publication of the magazine. However, as it does great honour to us both, you will forgive it.

The second volume of the songs I mentioned to you in my last is published to-day. I send you a copy, which I beg you will accept as a mark of the veneration I have long had, and shall ever have, for your character, and of the claim I make to your continued acquaintance. Your songs appear in the third volume, with your name in the index; as I assure you, sir, I have heard your *Tullochgorum,* particularly among our west-country folks, given to many different names, and most commonly to the immortal author of *The Minstrel,* who, indeed, never wrote anything superior to *Gie's a Sang, Montgomery cried.* Your brother[1] has promised me your verses to the Marquis of Huntly's reel, which certainly deserve a place in the collection. My kind host, Mr

[1] Mr James Skinner, a legal practitioner in Edinburgh. He was half-brother of the poet, and thirty years his junior. He died only a few years ago.

Cruikshank, of the High School here, and said to be one of the best Latins in this age, begs me to make you his grateful acknowledgments for the entertainment he has got in a Latin publication of yours, that I borrowed for him from your acquaintance and much-respected friend in this place, the Reverend Dr Webster.[1] Mr Cruikshank maintains that you write the best Latin since Buchanan. I leave Edinburgh to-morrow, but shall return in three weeks. Your song you mentioned in your last, to the tune of *Dumbarton Drums*, and the other, which you say was done by a brother in trade of mine, a ploughman, I shall thank you for a copy of each. I am ever, reverend sir, with the most respectful esteem and sincere veneration, yours, R. B.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

EDINBURGH, *February* 15, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I received yours with the greatest pleasure. I shall arrive at Glasgow on Monday evening; and beg, if possible, you will meet me on Tuesday. I shall wait you Tuesday all day. I shall be found at Davies's Black Bull Inn. I am hurried, as if hunted by fifty devils, else I should go to Greenock; but if you cannot possibly come, write me, if possible, to Glasgow, on Monday; or direct to me at Mossgiel by Mauchline; and name a day and place in Ayrshire, within a fortnight from this date, where I may meet you. I only stay a fortnight in Ayrshire, and return to Edinburgh. I am ever, my dearest friend, yours, R. B.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *Sunday* [*February* 17].

To-morrow, my dear madam, I leave Edinburgh. I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in, I could not find; and, indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of the family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken: I have entered into the Excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plait à Dieu—et mon roi.* I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of Fortune's palace shall we enter in, but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get anything to do. I wanted *un bût*, which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation: it is immediate bread; and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my

[1] A clergyman of the Scottish Episcopal Church in Edinburgh.

existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life: besides, the Commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends. R. B.

Mrs Rose, of Kilravock, had, on Burns's visit there, undertaken to obtain for him copies of two Highland airs with which he had been pleased on hearing them sung by her sister, Miss Rose, at Kildrummie. On the 30th November, she sent the airs enclosed in a graceful letter, breathing the respect with which Burns had inspired the generous natures of the upper circles of society in his native country. She tells him that the airs are already clothed with excellent thoughts; but 'these being in an unknown tongue to you, you must again have recourse to that same fertile imagination of yours to interpret them, and suppose a lover's description of the beauties of an adored mistress. Why did I say unknown? The language of love is a universal one, that seems to have escaped the confusion of Babel, and to be understood by all nations.' She adds, with reference to a letter of his: 'Allow me to believe that "Friendship will maintain the ground she has occupied" in both our hearts in spite of absence, and that when we do meet, it will be as acquaintance of a score of years' standing. . . . . Farewell, sir; I can only contribute the *widow's mite* to the esteem and admiration excited by your merits and genius; but this I give as she did—with all my heart.'[1]

TO MRS ROSE, OF KILRAVOCK.

EDINBURGH, *February* 17, 1788.

MADAM—You are much indebted to some indispensable business I have had on my hands, otherwise my gratitude threatened such a return for your obliging favour as would have tired your patience.

[1] Mrs Elizabeth Rose, born in 1747, *nineteenth* possessor of Kilravock, was a remarkable woman. In a *Genealogical Deduction of the Family of Rose of Kilravock*, edited from old documents by Mr Cosmo Innes, advocate (1848), she is described as 'the choice companion, the leader of all cheerful amusements, the humorous story-teller, the clever mimic, the very soul of society.' She was very fond of reading, and had a great admiration for literary men. 'In conversation, she was always animated and natural, full of genuine humour, and keen and quick perception of the ludicrous. . . . . She sung the airs of her own country, and she had learned to take a part in catches and glees, to make up the party with her father and brother. The same motive led her to study the violin, which she played like male artists—supported against her shoulder. . . . . She was enthusiastic and yet steady in her friendships; benevolent, hospitable, kind, and generous beyond her means.' Lady Kilravock, as she was called, had married a gentleman of her own family name, now dead, and was the mother of Hugh, twentieth Laird of Kilravock, who is spoken of as a boy in Burns's letter. Hugh died in 1827.

It but poorly expresses my feelings to say, that I am sensible of your kindness. It may be said of hearts such as yours is, and such, I hope, mine is, much more justly than Addison applies it—

'Some souls by instinct to each other turn.'

There was something in my reception at Kilravock so different from the cold, obsequious, dancing-school bow of politeness, that it almost got into my head that Friendship had occupied her ground without the intermediate march of Acquaintance. I wish I could transcribe, or rather transfuse into language, the glow of my heart when I read your letter. My ready fancy, with colours more mellow than life itself, painted the beautiful wild scenery of Kilravock; the venerable grandeur of the castle; the spreading woods; the winding river, gladly leaving his unsightly, heathy source, and lingering with apparent delight as he passes the fairy walk at the bottom of the garden; your late distressful anxieties;[1] your present enjoyments; your dear little angel, the pride of your hopes; my aged friend, venerable in worth and years, whose loyalty and other virtues will strongly entitle her to the support of the Almighty Spirit here, and his peculiar favour in a happier state of existence. You cannot imagine, madam, how much such feelings delight me: they are my dearest proofs of my own immortality. Should I never revisit the north, as probably I never will, nor again see your hospitable mansion, were I, some twenty years hence, to see your little fellow's name making a proper figure in a newspaper paragraph, my heart would bound with pleasure.

I am assisting a friend in a collection of Scottish songs, set to their proper tunes; every air worth preserving is to be included: among others, I have given *Morag*, and some few Highland airs which pleased me most, a dress which will be more generally known, though far, far inferior in real merit. As a small mark of my grateful esteem, I beg leave to present you with a copy of the work, as far as it is printed: the Man of Feeling, that first of men,[2] has promised to transmit it by the first opportunity.

I beg to be remembered most respectfully to my venerable friend, and to your little Highland chieftain.[3] When you see the 'two fair spirits of the hill' at Kildrummie,[4] tell them that I have done myself the honour of setting myself down as one of their admirers for at least twenty years to come—consequently, they must look upon me as an acquaintance for the same period; but, as the Apostle Paul says, 'this I ask of grace, not of debt.' I have the honour to be, madam, &c. R. B.

[1] Mrs Rose had just emerged from a litigation for the protection and establishment of her ancestral rights.

[2] Mr Henry Mackenzie was, through his mother, a relative of the Kilravock family.

[3] Mrs Rose's mother, and her son, Hugh.

[4] Miss Sophia Brodie of L[ethin], and Miss Rose of Kilravock.

The hour approached for Burns leaving Edinburgh. The final meeting with Clarinda, promised for eight in the evening, had taken place, exactly as a great pen has described the ideal of such partings—

——'I had
Most pretty things to say: ere I could tell him
How I would freely think on him at certain hours;
Such thoughts and such; or I could make him swear
The *shees* of Italy should not betray
Mine interest and his honour: or have charged him
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,
T' encounter me with orisons; for then
I am in Heaven for him; or ere I could
Give him that parting kiss, which I had set
Betwixt two charming words: comes in,' &c.[1]

Burns left Edinburgh on Monday the 18th of February. He took Glasgow in his way, mainly for the pleasure he anticipated in a meeting with Richard Brown, whose vessel, the *Mary and Jean*, was now advertised as to be ready at Greenock on the 1st of March, to receive goods for Grenada.[2] Arriving at the Black Bull Inn, he lost little time in penning a letter to the impatient Clarinda.

TO CLARINDA.

GLASGOW, *Monday Evening, Nine o'clock.*

The attraction of love, I find, is in an inverse proportion to the attraction of the Newtonian philosophy. In the system of Sir Isaac, the nearer objects were to one another, the stronger was the attractive force. In my system, every milestone that marked my progress from Clarinda, awakened a keener pang of attachment to her. How do you feel, my love? Is your heart ill at ease? I fear it. God forbid that these persecutors should harass that peace, which is more precious to me than my own. Be assured I shall ever think on you, muse on you, and, in my moments of devotion, pray for you. The hour that you are not in my thoughts, 'be that hour darkness; let the shadows of death cover it; let it not be numbered in the hours of the day!'

'When I forget the darling theme,
Be my tongue mute! my fancy paint no more!
And, dead to joy, forget my heart to beat!'

I have just met with my old friend, the ship-captain[3]—guess my pleasure: to meet you could alone have given me more. My brother William, too, the young saddler, has come to Glasgow to meet me; and here are we three spending the evening.

[1] *Cymbeline.* [2] *Edinburgh Advertiser*, February 15, 1788. [3] Mr Richard Brown.

I arrived here too late to write by post; but I'll wrap half-a-dozen sheets of blank-paper together, and send it by the Fly, under the name of a parcel. You will hear from me next post-town. I would write you a longer letter, but for the present circumstances of my friend.

Adieu, my Clarinda! I am just going to propose your health by way of grace-drink. SYLVANDER.

The bard proceeded next day to Paisley, where he already had established friendships; then to Dunlop, where he stayed two days. From Kilmarnock he gave Clarinda an account of his progress.

TO CLARINDA.

KILMARNOCK, *Friday* [*Feb.* 22].

I wrote you, my dear madam, the moment I alighted in Glasgow. Since then I have not had opportunity; for in Paisley, where I arrived next day, my worthy, wise friend, Mr Pattison, did not allow me a moment's respite. I was there ten hours; during which time I was introduced to nine men worth six thousands; five men worth ten thousands; his brother, richly worth twenty thousands; and a young weaver, who will have thirty thousands good when his father, who has no more children than the said weaver, and a Whig kirk, dies. Mr P. was bred a zealous Antiburgher; but during his widowerhood he has found their strictness incompatible with certain compromises he is often obliged to make with those powers of darkness—the devil, the world, and the flesh. * * * His only daughter, who, 'if the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale,' will have seven thousand pounds when her old father steps into the dark factory-office of Eternity with his well-thrummed web of life, has put him again and again in a commendable fit of indignation by requesting a harpsichord. 'Oh these boarding-schools!' exclaims my prudent friend; 'she was a good spinner and sewer till I was advised by her foes and mine to give her a year of Edinburgh!'

After two bottles more, my much-respected friend opened up to me a project—a legitimate child of Wisdom and Good Sense: 'twas no less than a long-thought-on and deeply-matured design, to marry a girl fully as elegant in her form as the famous priestess whom Saul consulted in his last hours, and who had been second maid of honour to his deceased wife. This, you may be sure, I highly applauded; so I hope for a pair of gloves by and by. I spent the two by-past days at Dunlop House, with that worthy family to whom I was deeply indebted early in my poetic career; and in about two hours I shall present your 'twa wee sarkies' to the little fellow. My dearest Clarinda, you are ever present with me; and these hours, that drawl by among the fools and rascals of this world, are

only supportable in the idea that they are the forerunners of that happy hour that ushers me to 'the mistress of my soul.' Next week I shall visit Dumfries, and next again return to Edinburgh. My letters in these hurrying dissipated hours will be heavy trash; but you know the writer. God bless you! SYLVANDER.

Next day he arrived at Mossgiel.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

MOSSGIEL, *24th February* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—I arrived here, at my brother's, only yesterday, after fighting my way through Paisley and Kilmarnock against those old powerful foes of mine—the devil, the world, and the flesh; so terrible in the fields of dissipation. I have met with few incidents in my life which gave me so much pleasure as meeting you in Glasgow. There is a time of life beyond which we cannot form a tie worth the name of friendship. 'Oh Youth! enchanting stage, profusely blest.'[1] Life is a fairy scene: almost all that deserves the name of enjoyment or pleasure is only a charming delusion; and in comes repining Age, in all the gravity of hoary Wisdom, and wretchedly chases away the bewitching phantom. When I think of life, I resolve to keep a strict look-out in the course of economy, for the sake of worldly convenience and independence of mind; to cultivate intimacy with a few of the companions of youth, that they may be the friends of age; never to refuse my liquorish humour a handful of the sweetmeats of life, when they come not too dear; and, for futurity—

> 'The present moment is our ain,
> The niest we never saw!'

How like you my philosophy? Give my best compliments to Mrs B., and believe me to be, my dear sir, yours most truly,

R. B.

From the same place he wrote to Clarinda, whose letters to him express the most eager solicitude for his communications. The letter has not been preserved. It was probably on Monday the 25th that he proceeded to Dumfriesshire, with a sagacious friend, Mr James Tennant, farmer, Glenconner, designing with his aid to view and judge of Mr Miller's farms on the banks of the Nith. He had not a very confident hope of being able to pitch on one which it would be prudent to take on lease; but the result was otherwise than he had looked for.

[1] This was to the last a favourite quotation of Clarinda.

TO CLARINDA.

CUMNOCK, 2d *March* 1788.

I hope, and am certain, that my generous Clarinda will not think my silence, for now a long week, has been in any degree owing to my forgetfulness. I have been tossed about through the country ever since I wrote you; and am here, returning from Dumfriesshire, at an inn, the post-office of the place, with just so long time as my horse eats his corn, to write you. I have been hurried with business and dissipation almost equal to the insidious decree of the Persian monarch's mandate, when he forbade asking petition of God or man for forty days. Had the venerable prophet been as throng [busy] as I, he had not broken the decree, at least not thrice a day.

I am thinking my farming scheme will yet hold. A worthy intelligent farmer, my father's friend and my own, has been with me on the spot: he thinks the bargain practicable. I am myself, on a more serious review of the lands, much better pleased with them. I won't mention this in writing to anybody but you and [Ainslie]. Don't accuse me of being fickle: I have the two plans of life before me, and I wish to adopt the one most likely to procure me independence. I shall be in Edinburgh next week. I long to see you: your image is omnipresent to me; nay, I am convinced I would soon idolatrise it most seriously—so much do absence and memory improve the medium through which one sees the much-loved object. * * * I hope, as I go home to-night, to find a letter from you at the post-office in Mauchline. I have just once seen that dear hand since I left Edinburgh—a letter, indeed, which much affected me. Tell me, first of womankind! will my warmest attachment, my sincerest friendship, my correspondence—will they be any compensation for the sacrifices you make for my sake? If they will, they are yours. If I settle on the farm I propose, I am just a day and a half's ride from Edinburgh.[1] We will meet—don't you say 'perhaps too often!'

Farewell, my fair, my charming poetess! May all good things ever attend you! I am ever, my dearest madam, yours,

SYLVANDER.

TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

MAUCHLINE, 3d *March* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—Apologies for not writing are frequently like apologies for not singing—the apology better than the song. I have fought my way severely through the savage hospitality of this

[1] The distance is a little over seventy miles. At this time, I presume, there was no public coach on even so important a line of communication as the road between Edinburgh and Dumfries. A mail-coach commenced running upon it on the 1st of September 1790.

country, [the object of all hosts being] to send every guest drunk to bed if they can. . . . .

I should return my thanks for your hospitality (I leave a blank for the epithet, as I know none can do it justice) to a poor wayfaring bard, who was spent and almost overpowered fighting with prosaic wickednesses in high places; but I am afraid lest you should burn the letter whenever you come to the passage, so I pass over it in silence. I am just returned from visiting Mr Miller's farm. The friend whom I told you I would take with me was highly pleased with the farm; and as he is, without exception, the most intelligent farmer in the country, he has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans of life before me: I shall balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. I have written Mr Miller, and shall wait on him when I come to town, which shall be the beginning or middle of next week: I would be in sooner, but my unlucky knee is rather worse, and I fear for some time will scarcely stand the fatigue of my Excise instructions. I only mention these ideas to you; and, indeed, except Mr Ainslie, whom I intend writing to to-morrow, I will not write at all to Edinburgh till I return to it. I would send my compliments to Mr Nicol, but he would be hurt if he knew I wrote to anybody, and not to him; so I shall only beg my best, kindest, kindest compliments to my worthy hostess and the sweet little Rosebud.

So soon as I am settled in the routine of life, either as an Excise-officer or as a farmer, I propose myself great pleasure from a regular correspondence with the only man almost I ever saw who joined the most attentive prudence with the warmest generosity.

I am much interested for that best of men, Mr Wood. I hope he is in better health and spirits than when I saw him last. I am ever, my dearest friend, your obliged humble servant, R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, 3*d March* 1788.[1]

MY DEAR FRIEND—I am just returned from Mr Miller's farm. My old friend whom I took with me was highly pleased with the bargain, and advised me to accept of it. He is the most intelligent, sensible farmer in the county, and his advice has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans before me: I shall endeavour to balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. On the whole, if I find Mr Miller in the same favourable disposition as when I saw him last, I shall in all probability turn farmer.

I have been through sore tribulation, and under much buffeting of the Wicked One, since I came to this country. Jean I found

[1] The letter had no date, but has been so indorsed by Mr Ainslie.

banished like a martyr—forlorn, destitute, and friendless. I have reconciled her to her mother. * * *

I shall be in Edinburgh the middle of next week. My farming ideas I shall keep private till I see. I got a letter from Clarinda yesterday, and she tells me she has got no letter of mine but one. Tell her that I wrote to her from Glasgow, from Kilmarnock, from Mauchline, and yesterday from Cumnock, as I returned from Dumfries. Indeed, she is the only person in Edinburgh I have written to till this day. How are your soul and body putting up?—a little like man and wife, I suppose. Your faithful friend,

R. B.

[TO ———?][1]

[MAUCHLINE, *between 3d and 8th March* 1788.]

MY DEAR SIR—My life, since I saw you last, has been one continued hurry; that savage hospitality which knocks a man down with strong liquors is the devil. I have a sore warfare in this world—the devil, the world, and the flesh are three formidable foes. The first, I generally try to fly from; the second, alas! generally flies from me; but the third is my plague—worse than the ten plagues of Egypt.

I have been looking over several farms in this country; one, in particular, in Nithsdale, pleased me so well, that if my offer to the proprietor is accepted, I shall commence farmer at Whitsunday. If farming do not appear eligible, I shall have recourse to my other shift;[2] but this to a friend.

I set out for Edinburgh on Monday morning; how long I stay there is uncertain, but you will know so soon as I can inform you myself. However, I determine poesy must be laid aside for some time; my mind has been vitiated with idleness, and it will take a good deal of effort to habituate it to the routine of business. I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely, R. B.

The poet's Ayrshire mistress was at this time about to give him a second pledge of fatal love. Mrs M'Lehose had been made aware of the fact, and alludes to it in a letter of 5th March. 'I hope you have not forgotten to kiss the little cherub for me' [the infant Robert Burns, living at Mossgiel]. 'Give him fifty, and think Clarinda blessing him all the while. I pity his mother sincerely, and wish a certain affair happily over.' In the same

[1] Allan Cunningham publishes a letter as addressed to Mr Robert Ainslie, under date Mauchline, July 1787, which only could have been written at this crisis of Burns's life, seeing that it alludes to his offer for Mr Miller's farm. Since we have already an undoubted letter of this time to Mr Robert Ainslie, I am compelled to surmise that the superscription has been given upon conjecture as well as the date, and is equally erroneous.

[2] The Excise.

letter she betrays the deep-seated wish of her heart—that Burns should wait till it should be possible for her to marry him. 'You know I count all things (Heaven excepted) but loss, *that I may win and keep you.*' From his letter to Robert Ainslie, 3d March, it fully appears that Burns had no design at that time of ever renewing his matrimonial relation with Jean. On the contrary, anxious apparently to keep himself free for the chance of obtaining Clarinda, and not without some apprehension that the marriage-certificate of March 1786, though destroyed, might prove an impediment to that consummation, he tells that he had taken a solemn promise from Jean—'never to attempt any claim upon me as a husband, even though any one should persuade her she had such a claim, which she had not, neither during my life nor after my death.' Jean was, in short, set aside as one towards whom he was under no moral tie, though he held himself under an obligation of humanity to protect her in her present circumstances. The grounds which appear for Burns coming to act in such a manner were—the divorce (for so it was in intent) which she and her father had instituted against him in his days of poverty, an act which had nearly driven him to exile and madness; and his only having been welcomed back to her and her family on his suddenly appearing before them with a little of the tinsel of Fortune upon his jacket. And it must be admitted, that had Burns never renewed his acquaintance with Jean, but allowed matters to stand simply as she and her family had settled them in 1786, there could have been no moral claim on their part towards him, however the legal question might have ultimately been ruled. The circumstance creating a difference was the renewed intercourse—a difference, the force of which will probably be estimated variously. I feel, for my own part, that this is one of the points of the poet's story in which he appears to least advantage; and I cannot but rejoice on his account that he finally, and in no long time, adopted better views regarding Jean. While feeling some surprise that two persons so generous and upright in the ordinary relations of life as Burns and Mrs M'Lehose, should have been able to reconcile themselves to the sacrifice of this poor village girl, even under all the temptations of a fondness which had risen to somewhat extravagant altitudes, we ought to remember that they are themselves unable to enter defences. We do not know the whole range of considerations which weighed with Burns. Without that knowledge, we cannot judge confidently. When the poet had afterwards to excuse himself to Mrs M'Lehose for having engaged

himself to her, so soon before he gave himself to another, he said: 'I did not, nor could I then know, all the powerful circumstances that Omnipotent Necessity was busy laying in wait for me. When you call over the scenes that have passed between us, you will survey the conduct of an honest man struggling successfully with temptations the most powerful that ever beset humanity, and preserving untainted honour in situations where the austerest virtue would have forgiven a fall.' This looks like a happy conscience respecting the present crisis of his life. Yet it may be doubted if he felt really quite at ease in contemplating Jean as no more than a subject of vagrant passion. His letters, after acknowledging her as his wife, all speak of that fact with a kind of self-congratulation, as if it had relieved his mind of some reflections on which he could not dwell with perfect peace.

When Jean was driven, in the middle of winter, from her parents' dwelling, she was at Burns's request taken in and sheltered by his friend Mrs Muir, the wife of the honest miller of Torbolton alluded to in Hornbook.[1] The poet now established her in a lodging in Mauchline, and succeeded in reconciling her mother to her so far, that she had the benefit of that relative's attendance in her present delicate condition. She had, however, no countenance from the poet's relations, or from any of her ordinary acquaintances—realising, indeed, as nearly as could well be, the condition of a maiden who speaks in one of her lover's ballads:

> 'My father put me frae his door,
> My friends they hae disowned me a';
> But I hae ane will tak my part—
> The bonny lad that's far awa'.'

No allusion is made by Burns in any of his letters to the second accouchement. It is recorded in his family-Bible, but under a date which must be a mistake—'March 3, 1788, were born to them twins again, two daughters, who died within a few days after their birth.'[2]

[1] Previously to this time, death had relieved Jean of the charge of her daughter, born in September 1786. The infant lived only fourteen months. The other child, Robert, remained under the kind care of his grandmother and uncle at Mossgiel.

[2] The birth of these infants is not noticed in the parish register of Mauchline—probably because they did not live to be baptised.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

[*March* 6, 1788.]

I own myself guilty, Clarinda: I should have written you last week. But when you recollect, my dearest madam, that yours of this night's post is only the third I have from you, and that this is the fifth or sixth I have sent to you, you will not reproach me, with a good grace, for unkindness. I have always some kind of idea not to sit down to write a letter, except I have time, and possession of my faculties, so as to do some justice to my letter; which at present is rarely my situation. For instance, yesterday I dined at a friend's at some distance: the savage hospitality of this country spent me the most part of the night over the nauseous potion in the bowl. This day—sick—headache—low spirits—miserable—fasting, except for a draught of water or small-beer. Now eight o'clock at night; only able to crawl ten minutes' walk into Mauchline, to wait the post, in the pleasurable hope of hearing from the mistress of my soul.

But truce with all this. When I sit down to write to you, all is happiness and peace. A hundred times a day do I figure you before your taper, your book or work laid aside as I get within the room. How happy have I been! and how little of that scantling portion of time called the life of man, is sacred to happiness, much less transport.

I could moralise to-night like a death's-head.

> 'O what is life, that thoughtless wish of all!
> A drop of honey in a draught of gall.'

Nothing astonishes me more, when a little sickness clogs the wheels of life, than the thoughtless career we run in the hour of health. 'None saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night: who teacheth us more knowledge than the beasts of the field, and more understanding than the fowls of the air!'

Give me, my Maker, to remember Thee! Give me to act up to the dignity of my nature! Give me to feel 'another's wo;' and continue with me that dear loved friend that feels with mine!

The dignifying and dignified consciousness of an honest man, and the well-grounded trust in approving Heaven, are two most substantial foundations of happiness. * * * *

I could not have written a page to any mortal except yourself. I'll write you by Sunday's post. Adieu! Good-night!

SYLVANDER.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March* 1788.

Clarinda, I have been so stung with your reproach for unkindness —a sin so unlike me, a sin I detest more than a breach of the whole Decalogue, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth articles excepted—

that I believe I shall not rest in my grave about it, if I die before I see you. You have often allowed me the head to judge and the heart to feel the influence of female excellence: was it not blasphemy, then, against your own charms and against my feelings to suppose that a short fortnight could abate my passion?

You, my love, may have your cares and anxieties to disturb you; but they are the usual occurrences of life. Your future views are fixed, and your mind in a settled routine. Could not you, my ever-dearest madam, make a little allowance for a man, after long absence, paying a short visit to a country full of friends, relations, and early intimates? Cannot you guess, my Clarinda, what thoughts, what cares, what anxious forebodings, hopes and fears, must crowd the breast of the man of keen sensibility, when no less is on the tapis than his aim, his employment, his very existence through future life?

To be overtopped in anything else, I can bear; but in the tests of generous love, I defy all mankind! not even to the tender, the fond, the loving Clarinda; she whose strength of attachment, whose melting soul, may vie with Eloisa and Sappho; not even she can overpay the affection she owes me!

Now that, not my apology, but my defence is made, I feel my soul respire more easily. I know you will go along with me in my justification: would to Heaven you could in my adoption too! I mean an adoption beneath the stars—an adoption where I might revel in the immediate beams of

'She the bright sun of all her sex.'

I would not have you, my dear madam, so much hurt at Miss Nimmo's coldness. 'Tis placing yourself below her—an honour she by no means deserves. We ought, when we wish to be economists in happiness—we ought, in the first place, to fix the standard of our own character; and when, on full examination, we know where we stand, and how much ground we occupy, let us contend for it as property; and those who seem to doubt or deny us what is justly ours, let us either pity their prejudices or despise their judgment. I know, my dear, you will say this is self-conceit; but I call it self-knowledge: the one is the overweening opinion of a fool, who fancies himself to be what he wishes himself to be thought; the other is the honest justice that a man of sense, who has thoroughly examined the subject, owes to himself. Without this standard, this column in our own mind, we are perpetually at the mercy of the petulance, the mistakes, the prejudices, nay, the very weakness and wickedness of our fellow-creatures.

I urge this, my dear, both to confirm myself in the doctrine which, I assure you, I sometimes need, and because I know that this causes you often much disquiet. To return to Miss Nimmo. She is most certainly a worthy soul; and equalled by very, very few in goodness of heart. But can she boast more goodness of

heart than Clarinda? Not even prejudice will dare to say so; for penetration and discernment, Clarinda sees far beyond her. To wit, Miss Nimmo dare make no pretence: to Clarinda's wit, scarce any of her sex dare make pretence. Personal charms, it would be ridiculous to run the parallel; and for conduct in life, Miss Nimmo was never called out, either much to do, or to suffer. Clarinda has been both; and has performed her part, where Miss Nimmo would have sunk at the bare idea.

Away, then, with these disquietudes! Let us pray with the honest weaver of Kilbarchan, 'Lord, send us a guid conceit o' oursel'!' or in the words of the auld sang—

> 'Who does me disdain, I can scorn them again,
> And I'll never mind any such foes.'

There is an error in the commerce of intimacy. * * * * * Happy is our lot, indeed, when we meet with an honest merchant, who is qualified to deal with us on our own terms; but that is a rarity: with almost everybody we must pocket our pearls, less or more, and learn, in the old Scots phrase, 'To gie sic like as we get.' For this reason we should try to erect a kind of bank or storehouse in our own mind; or, as the Psalmist says, 'We should commune with our own hearts and be still.' * * * *

I wrote you yesternight, which will reach you long before this can. I may write Mr Ainslie before I see him, but I am not sure.

Farewell! and remember SYLVANDER.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

MAUCHLINE, *7th March* 1788.

I have been out of the country, my dear friend, and have not had an opportunity of writing till now, when I am afraid you will be gone out of the country too. I have been looking at farms, and after all, perhaps I may settle in the character of a farmer. I have got so vicious a bent to idleness, and have ever been so little a man of business, that it will take no ordinary effort to bring my mind properly into the routine; but you will say a 'great effort is worthy of you.' I say so myself, and butter up my vanity with all the stimulating compliments I can think of. Men of grave, geometrical minds, the sons of 'which was to be demonstrated,' may cry up reason as much as they please; but I have always found an honest passion, or native instinct, the truest auxiliary in the warfare of this world. Reason almost always comes to me like an unlucky wife to a poor devil of a husband—just in sufficient time to add her reproaches to his other grievances.

[He goes on to speak of Jean, as having been found by him in a desolate state, and of his having obtained for her a safe harbourage, where she might remain till a certain event should

take place. In nautical metaphor, he has 'taken command of her, not ostensibly, but for a time in secret.']

I am gratified with your kind inquiries after her; as, after all, I may say with Othello—

——'Excellent wretch!
Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!'

I go for Edinburgh on Monday. Yours, R. B.

TO MR ROBERT MUIR.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March* 1788.

DEAR SIR—I have partly changed my ideas, my dear friend, since I saw you. I took old Glenconner with me to Mr Miller's farm; and he was so pleased with it, that I have wrote an offer to Mr Miller, which, if he accepts, I shall sit down a plain farmer—the happiest of lives when a man can live by it. In this case I shall not stay in Edinburgh above a week. I set out on Monday, and would have come by Kilmarnock, but there are several small sums owing me for my first edition about Galston and Newmills, and I shall set off so early as to despatch my business and reach Glasgow by night. When I return, I shall devote a forenoon or two to make some kind of acknowledgment for all the kindness I owe your friendship. Now that I hope to settle with some credit and comfort at home, there was not any friendship or friendly correspondence that promised me more pleasure than yours; I hope I will not be disappointed. I trust the spring will renew your shattered frame, and make your friends happy. You and I have often agreed that life is no great blessing on the whole. The close of life, indeed, to a reasoning age, is

'Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
Was rolled together, or had tried his beams
Athwart the gloom profound.'

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broken machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so; at least there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants: if that part of us called Mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with old-wife prejudices and tales! Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence they have often, perhaps always, been deceived. A man conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow-creatures—even granting that he may have been the sport at times of passions and instincts—he goes to a great unknown Being, who could have no other end in giving him existence but to make him happy; who gave him those passions and instincts, and well knows their force.

These, my worthy friend, are my ideas; and I know they are not

far different from yours. It becomes a man of sense to think for himself, particularly in a case where all men are equally interested, and where, indeed, all men are equally in the dark.

Adieu, my dear sir. God send us a cheerful meeting! R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March* 1788.

MADAM—The last paragraph in yours of the 30th February affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner, with any little wit I have, I do confess; but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm a great deal worse than I do the devil—at least as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honoured friend, who cannot appear in any light but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or, if you choose to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem of all; but God help us who are wits or witlings by profession: if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported!

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila.[1] I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honour, as Dr Beattie says to Ross the poet of his muse Scota, from which, by the by, I took the idea of Coila ('tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scottish dialect, which perhaps you have never seen):

'Ye shake your head, but o' my fegs
Ye 've set auld Scota on her legs:
Lang had she lien wi' beffs and flegs,
Bumbazed and dizzie;
Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,
Waes me, poor hizzie.'

R. B.

Burns, if he held by his intention, left Mauchline on the 10th of March, on his return to Edinburgh. A letter to Miss Chalmers speedily announces a notable event in his career:

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *March* 14, 1788.

I know, my ever dear friend, that you will be pleased with the news when I tell you I have at last taken a lease of a farm. Yesternight I completed a bargain with Mr Miller, of Dalswinton, for the

[1] A daughter of Mrs Dunlop was now engaged in painting a sketch of Coila.

farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles above Dumfries. I begin at Whitsunday to build a house, drive lime, &c.; and Heaven be my help! for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business. I have discharged all the army of my former pursuits, fancies, and pleasures —a motley host!—and have literally and strictly retained only the ideas of a few friends, which I have incorporated into a life-guard. I trust in Dr Johnson's observation, 'Where much is attempted, something is done.' Firmness, both in sufferance and exertion, is a character I would wish to be thought to possess; and have always despised the whining yelp of complaint, and the cowardly, feeble resolve.

Poor Miss K.[1] is ailing a good deal this winter, and begged me to remember her to you the first time I wrote to you. Surely woman, amiable woman, is often made in vain. Too delicately formed for the rougher pursuits of ambition; too noble for the dirt of avarice; and even too gentle for the rage of pleasure; formed indeed for, and highly susceptible of, enjoyment and rapture; but that enjoyment, alas! almost wholly at the mercy of the caprice, malevolence, stupidity, or wickedness of an animal at all times comparatively unfeeling, and often brutal. R. B.

Patrick Miller, banker, brother of the Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland, had recently become possessed of a beautiful estate in the lower part of the valley of the Nith. The lands and castle of Dalswinton had once been the property of the great family of Cumming, the ruin of which is dated from their opposition to Robert Bruce, by whom the chief was slain in the Greyfriars' Church, at Dumfries. The estate consists partly of some fine holm-land adjacent to the river, and partly of a series of gravelly terraces ascending towards the hills, and partially clothed with wood. Mr Miller, we have seen, had patronised Burns immediately after his arrival in Edinburgh. Besides sending him a present of ten guineas, he had expressed a strong wish to have him for a tenant—partly animated by a belief that farming was the course of life, apart from literature, best suited for the poet, and the most likely to preserve him from the temptations of society. Burns, with some reluctance, had gone at the end of autumn to see

[1] Miss Kennedy, sister of Mrs Gavin Hamilton. This lady, who is so frequently alluded to by Burns, survived him about forty years. She was, like most long-lived people, of a cheerful, benevolent disposition. When several years above ninety, she had the misfortune to break her arm by a fall down stairs. Her nephew, a medical man, immediately went to her in great solicitude, thinking that such an accident at such an age must have been very discomfiting indeed. The good old lady was, on the contrary, quite placid and happy. 'Isn't it,' said she, 'such a great mercy that it is not my leg; for in that case I might have been lame for life!'

the lands which Mr Miller had to offer; he had returned to see them again in March, when, contrary to his expectation, he found reason to hope that a subsistence might be realised out of one of the Dalswinton farms. Three were offered to him—one, named Foregirth, a fine piece of the haugh, bearing heavy crops of wheat; another, called Bankhead, only a little less rich; and one called Ellisland, adjacent to the river, on its right or opposite bank. The factor, father to the late Allan Cunningham, shewed Burns over them all, and explained their various merits. There cannot now be a doubt of the superior eligibility of Foregirth—of which it is related that it yielded £40 an acre in the famine year of 1800, and that the tenant of that period left it a gainer by £3000. Burns, however, was captivated by the fine situation of Ellisland, with its views up and down the river, and of the beautiful pleasure-grounds of Dalswinton; and he made what the factor called a poet's, not a farmer's choice.

Allan Cunningham, who was well informed on this point, says: 'Ellisland is beautifully situated on the south side of the Nith, some six miles above Dumfries: it joins the grounds of Friars' Carse on the north-west—the estate of Isle towards the south-east; the great road from Glasgow separates it from the hills of Dunscore; while the Nith, a pure stream running over the purest gravel, divides it from the holms and groves of Dalswinton. The farm amounts to upwards of a hundred acres, and is part holm and part croft land: the former, a deep rich loam, bears fine tall crops of wheat; the latter, though two-thirds stones on a bottom of gravel, yields, when carefully cultivated, good crops both of potatoes and corn; yet to a stranger the soil must have looked unpromising or barren; and Burns declared, after a shower had fallen on a field of new-sown and new-rolled barley, that it looked like a paved street.' That the land really was in a wretched state, and only to be rendered tolerably good by a large expenditure of capital for improvement, fully appears from an acknowledgment by the landlord himself.[1]

There is no reason to suppose that Mr Miller drove a hard

[1] Mr Miller gives an account of his estate at the time of his purchase, in the *General View of the Agriculture, &c., of Dumfriesshire.* 8vo, Edin. 1812. His letter is dated 24th September 1810. 'When I purchased this estate, about five-and-twenty years ago, I had not seen it. *It was in the most miserable state of exhaustion*, and all the tenants in poverty. Judge of the first when I inform you, that oats ready to be cut were sold at 25s. per acre upon the holm-grounds. *When I went to view my purchase, I was so much disgusted for eight or ten days, that I then meant never to return to this county.*'

bargain with Burns. He granted a lease of seventy-six years, at an annual rent of £50 for the three first years, and £70 for the remainder; agreeing further to give his tenant £300 to build a new farm-steading and enclose the fields.[1] The only reservation he made was one which the poet must himself have been pleased with—a right to plant a belt of about two acres, to screen the farm on the north-west, and a scaur or precipitous bank which overhung the river. Mr Miller constituted in himself one of the attractions of the place, for he was to all appearance kindly disposed towards Burns, and he was far from being a common-place neighbour. His mind was active, intelligent, and inventive. He was at this time conducting experiments for the propelling of vessels by means of paddles—a project which led to the introduction of one of the greatest mechanical improvements of modern times. At the suggestion of his sons' preceptor, James Taylor, and with the practical aid of an ingenious mechanist named Symington, one of his paddle-boats was tried, with a small steam-engine on board, on a lake adjacent to Dalswinton House, in the ensuing October, and proved to be completely successful. Unfortunately, Mr Miller was not persevering in his projects; and on some obstacles occurring, he abandoned that of steam-navigation. It was, however, from his boat, when lying in neglect at Port-Dundas, that Fulton and Henry Bell severally took those plans which they respectively realised on the Hudson and the Clyde in 1808 and 1812. It is a remarkable fact that Mr Miller and his family, though latterly landless, and reduced almost to poverty, never received the slightest acknowledgment from the nation, of the concern which the former had had in the application of the steam-engine to navigation.

While in Edinburgh on this occasion, Burns accomplished two other matters of business of no small importance to him—the obtaining an order from the Board of Excise for his instructions in the technicalities of that profession, and the adjustment of his accounts with Mr Creech the publisher. In a short series of letters to Clarinda, found dateless, but which undoubtedly belong to this period, allusion is made to these circumstances.

[1] The account which Gilbert Burns gave Dr Currie regarding his brother's lease of Ellisland is slightly discrepant, but I have no doubt he is mistaken. 'I never understood,' he says, 'that Mr Miller gave my brother the choice of any farm but Ellisland, on which Mr Miller fixed the rent himself, but allowed my brother fifty-seven years of a lease, and to point out what restrictions he should be under in the management.'

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Monday Noon [*17th March*[1]].

I will meet you to-morrow, Clarinda, as you appoint. My Excise affair is just concluded, and I have got my order for instructions: so far good. Wednesday night, I am engaged to sup among some of the principals of the Excise, so can only make a call for you that evening; but next day I stay to dine with one of the Commissioners, so cannot go till Friday morning.

Your hopes, your fears, your cares, my love, are mine; so don't mind them. I will take you in my hand through the dreary wilds of this world, and scare away the ravening bird or beast that would annoy you. I saw Mary in town to-day, and asked her if she had seen you. I shall certainly bespeak Mr Ainslie, as you desire.

Excuse me, my dearest angel, this hurried scrawl and miserable paper: circumstances make both. Farewell till to-morrow.

SYLVANDER.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Morning [*18th March*].

I am just hurrying away to wait on the Great Man, Clarinda; but I have more respect to my own peace and happiness than to set out without waiting on you; for my imagination, like a child's favourite bird, will fondly flutter along with this scrawl, till it perch on your bosom. I thank you for all the happiness you bestowed on me yesterday. The walk—delightful; the evening—rapture. Do not be uneasy to-day, Clarinda; forgive me. I am in rather better spirits to-day, though I had but an indifferent night. Care, anxiety, sat on my spirits; and all the cheerfulness of this morning is the fruit of some serious, important ideas that lie, in their realities, beyond 'the dark and the narrow house,' as Ossian, prince of poets, says. The Father of Mercies be with you, Clarinda! and every good thing attend you! SYLVANDER.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Wednesday Morning [*19th March*].

Clarinda, will that envious night-cap hinder you from appearing at the window as I pass?[2] 'Who is she that looketh forth as the

[1] In the authorised edition of the Clarinda correspondence, dates three weeks later are conjecturally assigned.

[2] Probably the poet at the time of writing this letter lodged with Nicol, whose house was in Buccleuch Street; in which case the Potterrow, where Mrs M'Lehose lived, would be on the line of his walk into town.—The residence of Mrs M'Lehose, at the time when Burns visited her, was a small *flat*, or floor of a house, situated over an alley which yet bears the name of General's Entry, in consequence, it is said, of General Monk having lived there when in command in Scotland. The house, accessible by a narrow winding-stair behind, is very humble in its accommodations, and now occupied by poor people. Alison's Square, where Miss Nimmo lived, being right opposite, we can readily see how Clarinda would feel the necessity of being cautious about the number of Burns's visits.

morning; fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners?'

Do not accuse me of fond folly for this line; you know I am a cool lover. I mean by these presents greeting, to let you to wit, that arch-rascal Creech has not done my business yesternight, which has put off my leaving town till Monday morning. To-morrow, at eleven, I meet with him for the last time; just the hour I should have met far more agreeable company.

You will tell me this evening whether you cannot make our hour of meeting to-morrow one o'clock. I have just now written Creech such a letter, that the very goose-feather in my hand shrunk back from the line, and seemed to say, 'I exceedingly fear and quake!' I am forming ideal schemes of vengeance..... Adieu, and think on SYLVANDER.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Friday, Nine o'clock, Night [21*st March*].

I am just now come in, and have read your letter. The first thing I did was to thank the Divine Disposer of events, that he has had such happiness in store for me as the connection I have with you. Life, my Clarinda, is a weary, barren path; and wo be to him or her that ventures on it alone! For me, I have my dearest partner of my soul: Clarinda and I will make out our pilgrimage together. Wherever I am, I shall constantly let her know how I go on, what I observe in the world around me, and what adventures I meet with. Will it please you, my love, to get every week, or at least every fortnight, a packet, two or three sheets, full of remarks, nonsense, news, rhymes, and old songs? Will you open, with satisfaction and delight, a letter from a man who loves you, who has loved you, and who will love you to death, through death, and for ever? Oh Clarinda, what do I owe to Heaven for blessing me with such a piece of exalted excellence as you! I call over your idea, as a miser counts over his treasure! Tell me, were you studious to please me last night? I am sure you did it to transport. How rich am I who have such a treasure as you! You know me; you know how to make me happy; and you do it most effectually. God bless you with

'Long life, long youth, long pleasure, and a friend!'

To-morrow night, according to your own direction, I shall watch the window: 'tis the star that guides me to paradise. The great relish to all is, that Honour, that Innocence, that Religion, are the witnesses and guarantees of our happiness. 'The Lord God knoweth,' and perhaps 'Israel he shall know,' my love and your merit. Adieu, Clarinda! I am going to remember you in my prayers. SYLVANDER.

The poet, on leaving Edinburgh at this time, sent Clarinda a pair of small decorated ale-glasses, along with a copy of verses:

TO CLARINDA,

WITH A PRESENT OF A PAIR OF DRINKING-GLASSES.

Fair Empress of the Poet's soul,
And Queen of Poetesses;
Clarinda, take this little boon,
This humble pair of glasses.

And fill them high with generous juice,
As generous as your mind;
And pledge me in the generous toast—
'The whole of human kind!'

'To those who love us!'—second fill;
But not to those whom we love;
Lest we love those who love not us!
A third—'To thee and me, love!'[1]

Burns would appear to have come to a reckoning with Mr Creech on the 20th, and thus to have been enabled to leave Edinburgh finally, or for a permanency, on the 24th. The amount of his profits by his Poems has been variously stated, and probably could not now be ascertained. The most authoritative statement we have on the subject is from the poet himself, in a letter of January 1789, to Dr Moore, where he says: 'I believe I shall, in whole, £100 copyright included, clear about £400, some little odds; and even part of this depends on what the gentleman [Creech] has yet to settle with me.' Mr William Nicol wrote to Mr Lewars of Dumfries, after Burns's death: 'He certainly told me that he received £600 for the first Edinburgh edition, and £100 afterwards for the copyright.' (*MS. in possession of the late Mr Lockhart.*) This report from so intimate a friend as Nicol would be entitled to weight, if it did not differ so violently from the bard's own statement. Dr Currie, who would have the best information which Gilbert Burns could give him on the subject, sets down the poet's profits at £500. I find that Mrs Begg considers this as the sum which was realised. Under the force of these testimonies, we are led to surmise that, when Burns

[1] The late Mr Charles K. Sharpe had obtained, as a gift from Clarinda, a copy of *Young's Night Thoughts*, bearing the following inscription:—

'To Mrs M'Ilhose, this poem, the sentiments of the heirs of immortality, told in the numbers of Paradise, is respectfully presented by ROBERT BURNS.'

spoke to Dr Moore of £400 and some little odds, he mentally discounted the expense attending his residence in Edinburgh while seeing the work through the press. It is also worthy of note that, on making up an ideal account of the expense of preparing the book, and deducting it from the receipts, a sum of about £420 is left for the author, to which, if we add £100 for copyright, the result comes to only a shade above the statement of Dr Currie.[1]

The probability accordingly is, that Burns had not so much as £400 wherewith to begin the world at this crisis; for we must of course understand that his tours, his accident, and even the time he spent in Edinburgh as a guest with Mr Cruikshank, were attended with expenses, which would be so much deducted from his little capital. If he had £380 at this time in his pocket, he had as much as there appears to be the least reason to expect.

That it was by no means a time of exultation or happiness, or even placidity of temper, fully appears from a letter written immediately after he had taken his farewell of the capital.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

GLASGOW, 26*th March* 1788.

I am monstrously to blame, my dear sir, in not writing to you, and sending you the Directory. I have been getting my tack extended, as I have taken a farm, and I have been racking shop accounts with Mr Creech; both of which, together with watching, fatigue, and a load of care almost too heavy for my shoulders, have in some degree actually fevered me. I really forgot the Directory yesterday, which vexed me; but I was convulsed with rage a great part of the day. I have to thank you for the ingenious, friendly, and elegant epistle from your friend Mr Crawford. I shall certainly write to him; but not now. This is merely a card to you as I am posting to Dumfriesshire, where many perplexing arrangements await me. I am vexed about the Directory; but, my dear sir, forgive me: these eight days I have been positively crazed. My compliments to Mrs B. I shall write to you at Grenada. I am ever, my dearest friend, yours, R. B.

[1] Heron, in his *Life of Burns*, says: 'Mr Creech has obligingly informed me that the whole sum paid to the poet for the copyright, and for the subscription-copies of his book, amounted to near £1100. Out of this sum, indeed, the expenses of printing the edition for the subscribers were to be deducted. I have likewise reason to believe, that he had consumed a much larger proportion of these gains than prudence could approve, while he superintended the impression, paid court to his patrons, and waited the full payment of the subscription.' All this must be taken as very doubtful.

The Mr Crawford here alluded to was the Laird of Cartsburn, near Greenock; an open-hearted, worthy man, who, having studied the works of the Ayrshire bard, and heard of his personal character from Richard Brown, was pleased to indite a letter, pressing him to pay a visit to that part of Scotland.

FROM THOMAS CRAWFORD, OF CARTSBURN, ESQ., TO ROBERT BURNS.

CARTSBURN, 16*th March* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—For congeniality of mind entitles me to the freedom of this appellation, and never did I use it with more cordial sincerity. Through the medium of our mutual friend Brown, I hazard inviting you to the participation of an agreeable rural retirement, at a convenient distance from a town where there are many of your admirers (but indeed it is not distinguished by that from any town in Great Britain): a library I hope not ill chosen; a cellar not ill stored; a hearty cock of a landlord, whom his perhaps too partial friends regard as destitute neither of taste nor letters. He has reached his eighth lustre untrammelled by the matrimonial chain; and having neither wife nor ostensible child to disturb his tranquillity or divide his affection, he can offer you a whole heart. Halt!—this is going too far; for he is not so forlorn a wretch as to be without both a *friend* and a *mistress*—*a Davie* and a *Jean;* but this does not hinder his having a very warm place in that same heart (for though the fellow's person be little, his heart is *large*) most cordially at your service! How do you like the bill of fare? Not amiss, provided it be not a vapouring sign to a wretched ale-house—'Good wine needs no "bush."' *Well-come* try (I must pun), and *welcome,* and I hope you will find it deficient neither in spirit nor flavour; but this sage reflection of yours prevents my proceeding to raise your expectations too high. This much I will, however, in justice to myself add—namely, that if you should be disappointed, I shall be much more so. Shall I, then, be blest with your society? Answer me, my dear boy!

But I forget myself: you are no classic—no Latin one, I mean—though certainly to be *classed* (allow me a jingle) among the first Caledonian *classics.* Tell me where you are. God knows I would gladly come for you in person; but as this is not in my power, will you allow me to send a servant and a horse for you? Do, my dear Burns, and bless me with your assent. Your hearty friend,

T. CRAWFORD.

This letter shews the kind of feeling with which Burns was hailed at his *début* by men of warm feelings and unsuspicious

temper. At an ordinary time, nothing could have afforded the bard greater pleasure than to cultivate the friendship of so frank a good-fellow as Cartsburn; but the crisis was most unpropitious.

Between Wednesday, 26th March, and the end of the week, he had travelled from Glasgow into Dumfriesshire, and attended to business there—a pretty rapid movement for those days. During his recent absence in Edinburgh, he must have received a succession of home letters, telling him, first, that twin infants were thrown upon his care; and next, that they had left this earthly scene. A composition of the Sunday, on his return from Dumfriesshire, reveals the depressed state of his mind at this crisis.

TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN.

MAUCHLINE, 31*st March* 1788.

Yesterday, my dear sir, as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favourite air, *Captain O'Kean*, coming at length into my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated.

The small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,
  The murmuring streamlet winds clear through the vale;
The hawthorn-trees blow in the dew of the morning,
  And wild scattered cowslips bedeck the green dale:
But what can give pleasure, or what can seem fair,
While the lingering moments are numbered by care?
  No flowers gaily springing, nor birds sweetly singing,
Can soothe the sad bosom of joyless despair.

I am tolerably pleased with these verses; but as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harassed with care and anxiety about this farming project of mine, that my Muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming: at present, the world sits such a load on my mind, that it has effaced almost every trace of the poet in me.

My very best compliments and good wishes to Mrs Cleghorn.

R. B.

Mr Cleghorn wrote in answer on the 27th April, expressing much gratification with the verses, and adding: 'I wish you would send me a verse or two more; and, if you have no objection, I would have it in the Jacobite style. Suppose it should be sung

after the fatal field of Culloden by the unfortunate Charles.' Burns consequently added two verses, and called the whole *The Chevalier's Lament.*

The deed that I dared, could it merit their malice,
  A king and a father to place on his throne?
His right are these hills, and his right are these valleys,
  Where the wild beasts find shelter, but I can find none.
But 'tis not my sufferings thus wretched, forlorn;
My brave gallant friends! 'tis your ruin I mourn;
  Your deeds proved so loyal in hot bloody trial—
Alas! I can make you no sweeter return!

Burns was now settled in Ayrshire for his instructions as an exciseman, the order for which was issued to an officer at Torbolton on the 31st March.[1] It was his object to have this business accomplished before Whitsunday term (25th May), when he had to take possession of his farm in Dumfriesshire. He had, however, a sacred duty to perform towards the virtuous but unfortunate household at Mossgiel. Burns was a most faithfully attached son and brother; and he must have felt that, by reason of the various consequences of his imprudence, obligations had hitherto been on his side. Gilbert had been struggling on with the ungrateful soil of Mossgiel, and only sinking year after year deeper into debt. The following undated letter of Robert Burns seems to have been addressed to Mr Gavin Hamilton, at some period prior to the present, when a proposal had been made to relieve Gilbert by the poet becoming his guarantee to a considerable amount. Robert, at no time wanton in the management of money, or reckless about his own affairs, such as they were, refused the request.

[1] The letter of instruction by the Board of Excise to the officer who trained Burns for the duties of an exciseman, is given in Hogg and Motherwell's edition of the poet's works:

'MR JAMES FINDLAY, OFFICER, TORBOLTON.

The Commissioners order, that you instruct the bearer, Mr Robert Burns, in the art of gauging, and practical dry gauging casks and utensils; and that you fit him for surveying victuallers, rectifiers, chandlers, tanners, tawers, maltsters, &c.; and when he has kept books regularly for six weeks at least, and drawn true vouchers and abstracts therefrom (which books, vouchers, and abstracts must be signed by your supervisor and yourself, as well as the said Mr Robert Burns), and sent to the Commissioners at his expense; and when he is furnished with proper instruments, and well instructed and qualified for an officer (then and not before, at your perils), you and your supervisor are to certify the same to the Board, expressing particularly therein the date of this letter; and that the above Mr Robert Burns hath cleared his quarters both for lodging and diet; that he has actually paid each of you for his instructions and examination; and that he has sufficient at the time to purchase a horse for his business.—I am your humble servant, A. PEARSON.

EXCISE OFFICE,
Edinburgh, 31*st March* 1788.'

This officer was, through Burns's means, introduced to Miss Merkland, one of the six Mauchline belles, and a marriage took place between that pair in September this year. Mrs Findlay died in August 1851, at the age of eighty-six. Burns seems to have had a turn for causing marriage in others, before he was satisfactorily married himself.

TO [MR GAVIN HAMILTON.]

MOSSGIEL, *Friday Morning.*

The language of refusal is to me the most difficult language on earth, and you are the man in the world, excepting one of Right Honourable designation,[1] to whom it gives me the greatest pain to hold such language. My brother has already got money, and shall want nothing in my power to enable him to fulfil his engagement with you; but to be security on so large a scale, even for a brother, is what I dare not do, except I were in such circumstances of life as that the worst that might happen could not greatly injure me.

I never wrote a letter which gave me so much pain in my life, as I know the unhappy consequences: I shall incur the displeasure of a gentleman for whom I have the highest respect, and to whom I am deeply obliged. I am ever, sir, your obliged and very humble servant, ROBERT BURNS.

Now, however, having realised the proceeds of his Poems, Burns advanced to Gilbert £180, to keep him afloat in his business, being, in all probability, about a moiety of the capital he himself possessed, or was likely for a long time to possess. In his letter of the ensuing January to Dr Moore, he says: 'I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part; I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the grand reckoning.' We learn indeed from Mrs Begg, that the money was understood in the family as lent to Gilbert without interest, as a provision due from Robert on behalf of his mother, on his marriage and consequent departure from the household throwing the future burden of her support upon the younger brother. It will be found that this loan had a somewhat curious and protracted history, bringing out some traits of self-sacrificing feeling and righteousness in the Burns family, such as, I am fain to think, are characteristic of homely society in Scotland, and constitute one of the chief glories of the Scottish name.

TO MR WILLIAM DUNBAR, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, *7th April* 1788.

I have not delayed so long to write you, my much respected friend, because I thought no further of my promise. I have long

[1] The Earl of Glencairn?

since given up that kind of formal correspondence, where one sits down irksomely to write a letter, because we think we are in duty bound so to do.

I have been roving over the country, as the farm I have taken is forty miles from this place, hiring servants and preparing matters; but most of all, I am earnestly busy to bring about a revolution in my own mind. As, till within these eighteen months, I never was the wealthy master of ten guineas, my knowledge of business is to learn; add to this, my late scenes of idleness and dissipation have enervated my mind to an alarming degree. Skill in the sober science of life is my most serious and hourly study. I have dropt all conversation and all reading (prose reading) but what tends in some way or other to my serious aim. Except one worthy young fellow, I have not one single correspondent in Edinburgh. You have, indeed, kindly made me an offer of that kind. The world of wits, and *gens comme il faut* which I lately left, and with whom I never again will intimately mix—from that port, sir, I expect your Gazette: what *les beaux esprits* are saying, what they are doing, and what they are singing. Any sober intelligence from my sequestered walks of life; any droll original; any passing remark, important forsooth, because it is mine; any little poetic effort, however embryoth; these, my dear sir, are all you have to expect from me. When I talk of poetic efforts, I must have it always understood that I appeal from your wit and taste to your friendship and good-nature. The first would be my favourite tribunal, where I defied censure; but the last, where I declined justice.

I have scarcely made a single distich since I saw you. When I meet with an old Scots air that has any facetious idea in its name, I have a peculiar pleasure in following out that idea for a verse or two.

I trust that this will find you in better health than I did last time I called for you. A few lines from you, directed to me at Mauchline, were it but to let me know how you are, will set my mind a good deal [at rest]. Now, never shun the idea of writing me, because perhaps you may be out of humour or spirits. I could give you a hundred good consequences attending a dull letter; one, for example, and the remaining ninety-nine some other time—it will always serve to keep in countenance, my much respected sir, your obliged friend and humble servant, R. B.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

MAUCHLINE, *7th April* 1788.

I am indebted to you and Miss Nimmo for letting me know Miss Kennedy. Strange! how apt we are to indulge prejudices in our judgments of one another! Even I, who pique myself on my skill

in marking characters—because I am too proud of my character as a man to be dazzled in my judgment for glaring wealth, and too proud of my situation as a poor man to be biased against squalid poverty—I was unacquainted with Miss K.'s very uncommon worth.

I am going on a good deal progressive in *mon grand but*—the sober science of life. I have lately made some sacrifices, for which, were I *vivâ voce* with you to paint the situation and recount the circumstances, you would applaud me. R. B.

The allusion in the last sentence might be to the advance of money he had made in favour of his brother, but more probably was to his change of intention regarding Jean.

It may be remarked, that the short series of letters to Clarinda, before his final departure for the country, do not breathe the same ardour as those written in the two previous months. A letter 'every week, or at least every fortnight,' is something of a down-come from the almost daily correspondence of the last week of February. And it is remarkable that no letters of Sylvander to Clarinda between that which I have put under 21st March, and another written a twelvemonth after, have presented themselves. There is, indeed, no room for doubt, that at this time of passage between one kind of life and another, a revolution took place in the poet's mind regarding the disposal of himself among the various claimants of his affections. Without any wish to bring him into derogatory comparisons, we might imagine him as now looking round amongst them much in the style of Macheath at the conclusion of his career, and feeling the force of what that hero said: 'Ladies, I hope you will give me leave to present a partner to each of you, and (if I may without offence) for this time I take Polly for mine—and for life, you slut, *for we were really married.*' It is easy to imagine how, in the first two or three weeks of his residence in Ayrshire during April, the immediate impression of his kind-hearted Jean, whose blanched cheek could not be seen without reminding him of what she had suffered for his sake, would tell on a heart which, even under deep resentment, had whispered to him that he could not but love her—how the sensibility, intelligence, and cleverness of Mrs M'Lehose, who only could be his upon a remote contingency, would in such circumstances 'pale their ineffectual fires'—how even so prosaic a consideration as the immediate eligibility of Jean for the homely course of life which fate had laid out before him, would weigh with a spirit which, amidst all its vagaries, was not deficient in

the economical and provident virtues of the Scottish character, and thus help in restoring the rustic damsel to what everybody will feel to have been her rightful place. One plain fact, too, manifestly operated strongly with our poet—and this was, that the poor girl was in a manner thrown upon his hands. Rejected by her father, and under the ban of society, there was no resource for her but the protection of Burns. Thus it was that the renewal of their acquaintance, after the first alienation, had come to place her on a wholly different moral relation towards him from that in which it had been left by the irregular divorce of April 1786.

Were consistency, indeed, one of the most notable features of human nature, as the reverse is the case, we might marvel a little at Burns, on the 2d of March, meeting Clarinda in prayers at an appointed hour, and *next day* speaking with levity of his intercourse with Jean—vowing to love Clarinda 'to death, through death, and for ever,' in March, and before April was out giving another woman a permanent right to his affections, albeit for the time under secrecy. Perhaps, after all, these revolutions in the ardent vivacious mind of Burns are less astounding than the fact (for it is one beyond all question) that the poet was not now, and never had been, exactly the favourite lover of Jean. There was, it seems, another person whom she fancied above him, though, as but too plainly appears, she had been unable to contend against the fascination of those dark eyes in which lay her fate.

So ends, for the meantime, the Clarinda correspondence—a curious episode in the history of Burns. For three months he had written to this lady in the language of Eloise's lover, and been addressed by her in terms scarcely less ardent. And yet from this moment we see no further trace of her influence over his mind. She forms in no ostensible degree an obstacle to his almost immediately surrendering himself as the husband of another woman. Was there any sincerity in the feeling he professed for her all along? The style of the letters is of that extravagant kind which sometimes does not so much reveal passion as it masks indifference. The circumstances of the lady were such as to make a real passion not much of a likelihood. Yet many of the avowals of Burns towards Mrs M'Lehose were of a kind which we can scarcely suppose to have been used by him otherwise than as declarations of a passion in some manner or degree real. Perhaps the justest theory on the subject would be one taking a medium view. There

was a *kind* of earnestness in Sylvander's flame for Clarinda—a kind involving a good deal of self-delusion, mingled with some reality—a genuine partiality augmented to affected raptures by a good-natured desire to meet the wishes of one who evidently desired to be strongly loved because she herself was much in love. Poor Clarinda—the primal misfortune of your almost forced union with heartless grossness was not destined to be compensated by the attachment of unsteady genius! Perhaps the second misfortune was even worse to bear than the first—for with Burns she had no refuge from injustice in contempt or hatred. To the end of her long life, though unable to speak with any patience of his marriage, she never ceased to bewail his untimely death, and to glow over the productions of his Muse.[1]

TO MR JAMES SMITH, AVON PRINTFIELD, LINLITHGOW.

MAUCHLINE, *April* 28, 1788.

Beware of your Strasburgh, my good sir! Look on this as the opening of a correspondence, like the opening of a twenty-four gun battery!

There is no understanding a man properly without knowing something of his previous ideas—that is to say, if the man has any ideas; for I know many who, in the animal-muster, pass for men, that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, 1·25—1·5—1·75 (or some such fractional matter); so, to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

'Bode a robe and wear it,
Bode a poke and bear it,'

says the wise old Scots adage! I hate to presage ill-luck; and as my girl has been doubly kinder to me than even the best of women usually are to their partners of our sex in similar circumstances, I reckon on twelve times a brace of children against I celebrate my twelfth wedding-day. * * *

'Light's heartsome,' quo' the wife when she was stealing sheep. You see what a lamp I have hung up to lighten your paths, when

[1] 'On returning from Edinburgh [in spring '88], Burns wore a breast-pin which he had got from Clarinda. After his marriage, he sent his brother William to Glasgow, with bonny Jean on a horse behind him, where an artist took a miniature of her, which was placed in the pin, with the motto: "To err is human; to forgive, divine."'—*Recollection of Mrs Begg.* This is a bit of prose in our poet's history, but too *curiously human* to be omitted.

you are idle enough to explore the combinations and relations of my ideas. 'Tis now as plain as a pikestaff why a twenty-four gun battery was a metaphor I could readily employ.

Now for business. I intend to present Mrs Burns with a printed shawl, an article of which I daresay you have variety: 'tis my first present to her since I have irrevocably called her mine; and I have a kind of whimsical wish to get the first said present from an old and much valued friend of hers and mine—a trusty Trojan, whose friendship I count myself possessed of as a liferent lease.

Look on this letter as a 'beginning of sorrows;' I will write you till your eyes ache reading nonsense.

Mrs Burns ('tis only her private designation) begs her best compliments to you. R. B.

This letter is the first known indication of Burns having finally yielded to the matrimonial claims of Jean. It does not imply a ceremonial marriage, but only at the utmost that verbal, however private, acknowledgment of the lady as his wife, which in Scotland binds man to woman for all legal purposes. The eldest daughter of Mr Gavin Hamilton remembers Burns making the first intimation of the fact at her father's breakfast-table, when Mr Robert Aiken was also present. Mrs Hamilton having to express regret for not being able to give Mr Aiken his customary egg, the poet said that if she would send over the way to 'Mrs Burns,' she might have some—an offer of which the writer's lady did not choose to take any notice, having no doubt been put a little out of patience by the various ups and downs attending the status of the said Mrs Burns during the two bypast years.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 28*th April* 1788.

MADAM—Your powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the Excise business without solicitation, and as it costs me only six months'[1] attendance for instructions to entitle me to a commission—which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed—I thought five-and-thirty pounds a year was no bad *dernier resort* for a poor poet, if Fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

[1] Mistake for weeks.

For this reason, I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whitsunday. Still, madam, I prepared with the sincerest pleasure to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night, to set out on Sunday; but for some nights preceding I had slept in an apartment where the force of the winds and rains was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the windows, walls, &c. In consequence, I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday, unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a violent cold.

You see, madam, the truth of the French maxim, *le vrai n'est pas toujours le vraisemblable*. Your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life.

Your books have delighted me; Virgil, Dryden, and Tasso, were all equally strangers to me; but of this more at large in my next. R. B.

TO PROFESSOR STEWART.

MAUCHLINE, 3d *May* 1788.

SIR—I enclose you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that great unknown Being who frames the chain of causes and events, prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, sir, to claim it as my privilege to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life. R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 4th *May* 1788.

MADAM—Dryden's Virgil has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the Georgics are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is, indeed, a species of writing entirely new to me, and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation: but, alas! when I read the Georgics, and then survey my own powers, 'tis like the idea of a Shetland pony, drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter, to start for

the plate. I own I am disappointed in the Æneid. Faultless correctness may please, and does highly please, the lettered critic; but to that awful character I have not the most distant pretensions. I do not know whether I do not hazard my pretensions to be a critic of any kind, when I say that I think Virgil in many instances a servile copier of Homer. If I had the Odyssey by me, I could parallel many passages where Virgil has evidently copied, but by no means improved, Homer. Nor can I think there is anything of this owing to the translators; for from everything I have seen of Dryden, I think him, in genius and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough to form an opinion—in some future letter you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most. R. B.

TO MR SAMUEL BROWN.

MOSSGIEL, *4th May* 1788.

DEAR UNCLE—This, I hope, will find you and your conjugal yoke-fellow in your good old way. I am impatient to know if the Ailsa fowling be commenced for this season yet, as I want three or four stones of feathers, and I hope you will bespeak them for me. It would be a vain attempt for me to enumerate the various transactions I have been engaged in since I saw you last; but this know, I engaged in a *smuggling trade*, and God knows if ever any poor man experienced better returns—two for one: but as freight and delivery have turned out so dear, I am thinking of taking out a licence, and beginning in fair trade. I have taken a farm on the borders of the Nith, and, in imitation of the old patriarchs, get men-servants and maid-servants, and flocks and herds, and beget sons and daughters. Your obedient nephew, R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, *May* 26, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I am two kind letters in your debt; but I have been from home, and horridly busy, buying and preparing for my farming business, over and above the plague of my Excise instructions, which this week will finish.

As I flatter my wishes that I foresee many future years' correspondence between us, 'tis foolish to talk of excusing dull epistles: a dull letter may be a very kind one. I have the pleasure to tell you that I have been extremely fortunate in all my buyings and bargainings hitherto—Mrs Burns not excepted; which title I now avow to the world. I am truly pleased with this last affair; it has,

indeed, added to my anxieties for futurity, but it has given a stability to my mind and resolutions unknown before; and the poor girl has the most sacred enthusiasm of attachment to me, and has not a wish but to gratify my every idea of her deportment. I am interrupted—Farewell! my dear sir. R. B.

TO MR JOHNSON.

MAUCHLINE, *25th* [*May*] 17[88].

MY DEAR SIR—I am really uneasy about that money which Mr Creech owes me per note in your hand, and I want it much at present, as I am engaging in business pretty deeply both for myself and my brother. A hundred guineas can be but a trifling affair to him, and 'tis a matter of most serious importance to me. To-morrow I begin my operations as a farmer, and God speed the plough!

I am so enamoured with a certain girl's merit, that I have given her a legal title . . . I found I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands; and though Pride and seeming Justice were murderous king's advocates on the one side, yet Humanity, Generosity, and Forgiveness, were such powerful, such irresistible counsel on the other side, that a jury of all endearments and attachments brought in an unanimous verdict—*Not Guilty!* And the Panel, be it known unto all whom it may concern, is installed and instated into all the rights, privileges, immunities, franchises, . . . that at present do, or in any time coming may, belong to the name, title, designation, &c., of

R. BURNS.[1]

TO MRS DUNLOP.

27th May 1788.

MADAM—I have been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which has followed me, in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret, in the fleeting hours of my late Will-o'-wisp appearance, that 'here I had no continuing city;' and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendour put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life—insignificance and poverty.

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me), than the importance the opulent bestow

[1] From the original, in the possession of Archibald Hastie, Esq., M.P.

on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon, I had the honour to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fireside, where the planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who, though in appearance partakers, and equally noble partakers, of the same nature with madame, are from time to time—their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay, a good part of their very thoughts—sold for months and years, not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but the caprices of the important few.[1] We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honour to commend them. But light be the turf upon his breast who taught 'Reverence thyself.' We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in the air in the wantonness of his pride. R. B.

The Edinburgh period of the life of Burns is now brought to a close. From the facts ascertained, the testimony of respectable associates, and, above all, from the transparent evidence furnished by his own confidential outpourings, we may form a tolerable judgment of the way in which he bore the trial of a most extraordinary position. All—the admiring, the disliking, and the indifferent—must, we think, admit that Burns, externally a peasant, and of peasant-breeding, but internally a great man, had come through the crisis without the slightest derogation from his true character. Intellectually a giant, he maintained his proportions in conventional scenes which too often cause a sacrifice of the Inherent to the Accidental, of the True to the False, of the Great to the Mean. The dignity of the whole figure, as it looms through the saloons of the polite and learned world of Edinburgh, must, indeed, form a gratifying picture in the minds of all true men for ever. For once the natural lineaments of a MAN stand forth in undoubted grandeur, without being in the slightest degree affected either by past or by present circumstances. It will be seen that, as a necessary part of the great character which he maintained so well, Burns preserved perfect modesty regarding his own pretensions. Not one trace of that vanity which has diminished the shadows of so many bards can

[1] In Scotland, servants are usually engaged by the half-year, the terms being Whitsunday (May 25) and Martinmas (November 22).

be detected in him. The heart, too, is right: he forgets no old friend, nor does he lose one jot of his original love and respect for the class amongst whom he spent his early days. With such admissions in his favour, may we not say that he passed through his sixteen months' trial triumphantly? Yes; but it will be remembered that Burns had continued during this time to be that same passion-driven being which he was, so much to his own loss, in earlier years. In point of fact, this cannot be disputed; his own words at once admit, and, as far as possible, expiate the fault. 'My greatest enemy is MOI-MEME!'—words ever memorable, and ever touching.

The humiliating end of the scene of the laureation in a receipt of 'Excise instructions' is so painful, that I feel as if taking only the most common-place views of Burns at this time were a relief. It is vain to blame the age, or any men belonging to it, when a new Burns would be in an equally false position, as far as his subsistence and his place in the world are concerned, to-morrow. This is an industrial world, and one in which every man is left to work out a fate and a place for himself. While it so lasts, exceptions to the rule, as pensionings and donations, are believed to do harm by causing a forfeiture of that spirit of independence which is a needful part of the moral system during the existence of such a dispensation.[1] There is, then, a dilemma in the situation of the poet-oracle when he arises. Either he must drudge and misapply his powers, or he must rightly apply them amidst such difficulties as in such a world beset the poor man. Burns felt the difficulty in its full force. He was willing to make many sacrifices to overcome it. He would work, for example, at a farm. But, then, he had only two hundred pounds to help him in the struggle—a

[1] It is common to write in a disparaging strain respecting the system of patronage which prevailed in the times of Dryden. There is some reason to suspect that we judge of it under the influence of maxims appropriate to a later age. Where industrial competition is keen, as it is with us, dependence in any form is degrading, and must be injurious. But in those days, when no one seems to have had any great difficulty in obtaining such a subsistence as he desired, or when men at least were generally more indifferent on such matters, dependence on exalted personages must have been differently regarded, and hence would be attended with different effects. It really does not appear, for instance, that Gay found any discomfort, or forfeited any public respect, in living with the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. The very simplicity which so often attaches to the literary character would help in making such an arrangement easy to both parties. As for the flattering dedications of those days, we should recollect in what a degree such things are matters of form or of fashion, as titles and expressions of courtesy are even now. Probably, when a petitioner of the House of Commons promises to 'pray' for it in the event of his request being granted, he connects fully as sincere an idea with his vows as Dryden did with his when he paid court to Halifax or Dorset.

sum in the inadequacy of which he unavoidably foresaw many troubles and dangers. To mend matters a little, he was willing to be an exciseman, and even to bend himself to the courting of lordly patronage in order to secure this boon. He fondly hoped yet to have some time to exercise his true God-appointed vocation. Vain effort—vain hope! We shall see that this unworthy appointment—for so it was to him, though to many a good man it may be otherwise—became a chain round his neck, preventing him by its petty and illusive hopes from taking other and superior means of bettering his circumstances. If, then, we have to grieve over the close of this period of the life of our great poet, it is well to see that the evil had its root in social arrangements and axioms which still hold sway over us, and which must every day have their victims, though seldom one of so stupendous a character. Let us fully understand that Burns was sunk by society into the humble revenue-officer *only because nature had raised him into the illustrious poet*—for of course, with only his abilities, and not that superadded something which constituted his peculiar gift, he might have risen in prosperity and worldly dignity, as many able peasants and yeomen have done before, and are doing every day.

Drinking-glasses.

ELLISLAND.

JUNE 1788—DECEMBER 1791.

BURNS appears to have come to reside at his farm on the 13th of June. The old *steading* being worn out, and requiring renewal, he was not yet in a position to commence housekeeping with his wife and family. It was arranged that, until a new house should be built, Jean and her sole surviving babe should remain at Mauchline, Burns alone living at Ellisland, where for the meantime he had a mere hovel for his lodging. Obliged to settle, in these cheerless circumstances, in a place where he was entirely a stranger, and where a range of new and sordid cares awaited him, he seems to have been at first in a most uncomfortable state of mind.

TO MRS DUNLOP,

AT MR DUNLOP'S, HADDINGTON.

ELLISLAND, *13th* [*14th ?*] *June* 1788.

Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravelled, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags, at each remove, a lengthen'd chain.—GOLDSMITH.

This is the second day, my honoured friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old, smoky spence; far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except Jenny Geddes, the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares and novel plans hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, consequently the dreary objects seem larger than the life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind.

'The valiant, in himself what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes?' &c.

Your surmise, madam, is just; I am, indeed, a husband. * * * To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger. My preservative from the first, is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honour and her attachment to me: my antidote against the last, is my long and deep-rooted affection for her.

In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress; and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business.

The Muses must not be offended when I tell them the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas;* but I assure them their ladyships will ever come next in place.

You are right that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number.

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements; but I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter—there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery.

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by more than commonly handsome figure: these, I think, in a woman may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny pay wedding. R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *June* 14 [15?], 1788.

This is now the third day, my dearest sir, that I have sojourned in these regions; and during these three days you have occupied more of my thoughts than in three weeks preceding: in Ayrshire, I have several variations of friendship's compass: here, it points invariably to the pole. My farm gives me a good many uncouth cares and anxieties, but I hate the language of complaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says well: 'Why should a living man complain?'

I have lately been much mortified with contemplating an unlucky imperfection in the very framing and construction of my soul; namely, a blundering inaccuracy of her olfactory organs in hitting the scent of craft or design in my fellow-creatures. I do not mean any compliment to my ingenuousness, or to hint that the defect is in consequence of the unsuspicious simplicity of conscious truth and honour: I take it to be, in some way or other, an imperfection in the mental sight; or, metaphor apart, some modification of dulness. In two or three instances lately I have been most shamefully out.

I have all along hitherto, in the warfare of life, been bred to arms among the light-horse—the picket-guards of fancy—a kind of hussars and Highlanders of the brain; but I am firmly resolved to sell out of these giddy battalions, who have no ideas

of a battle but fighting the foe, or of a siege but storming the town. Cost what it will, I am determined to buy in among the grave squadrons of heavy-armed Thought, or the artillery corps of plodding Contrivance.

What books are you reading, or what is the subject of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession? You said something about religion in your last. I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire; but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow, if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being well married: you have so much sense and knowledge of human nature, that though you may not realise perhaps the ideas of romance, yet you will never be ill married.

Were it not for the terrors of my ticklish situation respecting provision for a family of children, I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness. As it is, I look to the Excise scheme as a certainty of maintenance. A maintenance! —luxury to what either Mrs Burns or I was born to. Adieu!

R. B.

The thoughts of Burns at this crisis are further revealed by an extract which Dr Currie gives from his Commonplace-book.

ELLISLAND, *Sunday* 14*th* [15*th* ?] *June* 1788.[1]

This is now the third day that I have been in this country. 'Lord! what is man?' What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas, and fancies! And what a capricious kind of existence he has here! . . . There is, indeed, an elsewhere, where, as Thomson says, *virtue sole survives.*

——— 'Tell us, ye dead;
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
——————— A little time
Will make us wise as you are, and as close.'

I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's Adam, 'gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace.'

But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream, till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, *the*

[1] The 14th of June 1788 having been a Saturday, it may be surmised that Burns wrote several dates at this time a day too early.

water is naught and the ground barren, and nothing short of a supernaturally-gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

Wedlock—the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be anything with me but names—was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on: in my present situation, it was absolutely necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest pride of character, justice to my own happiness for after-life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on her part to repent it. I can fancy how, but have never seen where, I could have made a better choice. Come, then, let me act up to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young—

> 'On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man!'

It is very evident in these letters that Burns contemplated his situation and prospects, not with the levity usually expected from a son of the Muses, but with the consideration and forethought which beseem a prudent man of the world, anxious to fulfil all social and domestic duties. There is something very pleasing in his expressions of self-satisfaction on his final union with Jean. It was certainly disadvantageous for him to be thus hurried into the cares and expenses of matrimony; he might have got a bride of superior education, more fitted to exercise a salutary control over his mind. It was to be regretted that the 'antecedents' of Mrs Burns threw her, and consequently her husband, a little out of harmony with the better society which it might have been of importance to him to cultivate. And yet every living and future admirer of Burns must rejoice that the chains of his Jean did after all bind down this extravagant and erring spirit, as far as that was possible.

In a different strain Burns addressed his early friend Mr Hugh Parker of Kilmarnock on the present style and circumstances of his life:

EPISTLE TO HUGH PARKER.

In this strange land, this uncouth clime,
A land unknown to prose or rhyme;
Where words ne'er crost the Muse's heckles,[1]
Nor limpet in poetic shackles;

[1] Hackles—an instrument for dressing flax.

A land that Prose did never view it,
Except when drunk he stacher't through it; staggered
Here, ambush'd by the chimla cheek, chimney
Hid in an atmosphere of reek, smoke
I hear a wheel thrum i' the neuk,
I hear it—for in vain I leuk.
The red peat gleams, a fiery kernel,
Enhusked by a fog infernal:
Here, for my wonted rhyming raptures,
I sit and count my sins by chapters;
For life and spunk like ither Christians,
I 'm dwindled down to mere existence—
Wi' nae converse but Gallowa' bodies,[1]
Wi' nae kenn'd face but Jenny Geddes.[2]
Jenny, my Pegasean pride!
Dowie she saunters down Nithside, Sad
And aye a westlin leuk she throws,
While tears hap o'er her auld brown nose!
Was it for this, wi' canny care, gentle
Thou bure the Bard through many a shire?
At howes or hillocks never stumbled,
And late or early never grumbled?
Oh, had I power like inclination,
I'd heeze thee up a constellation, raise
To canter with the Sagitarre,
Or loup the ecliptic like a bar;
Or turn the pole like any arrow;
Or, when auld Phœbus bids good-morrow,
Down the zodiac urge the race,
And cast dirt on his godship's face;
For I could lay my bread and kail
He'd ne'er cast saut upo' thy tail.
Wi' a' this care and a' this grief,
And sma', sma' prospect of relief,
And nought but peat-reek i' my head,
How can I write what ye can read?
Torbolton, twenty-fourth o' June,
Ye'll find me in a better tune;
But till we meet and weet our whistle,
Tak this excuse for nae epistle.

ROBERT BURNS.

Wandering a solitary being on the banks of the Nith, his heart reverted to the damsel on the banks of the Ayr, whom he had lately taken by the hand as his wife, and who would have now

[1] Ellisland is near the borders of the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, a portion of the district popularly called Galloway.

[2] His mare.

been sharing his household cares, if he had had a house into which to put her. The peace of conscience secured by his acceptance of Jean as his wife, must have added not a little to the pleasure he felt in musing on her image, and sending his thoughts towards the place which her presence brightened. We have an invaluable memorial of the feeling of the moment in his charming canzonet—

I LOVE MY JEAN.

TUNE—*Miss Admiral Gordon's Strathspey.*

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
  I dearly like the west,
For there the bonny lassie lives,
  The lassie I lo'e best:
There 's wild woods grow, and rivers row,
  And monie a hill between;[1]
But day and night my fancy's flight
  Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
  I see her sweet and fair;
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
  I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonny flower that springs
  By fountain, shaw, or green;
There 's not a bonny bird that sings,
  But minds me o' my Jean.[2]

[1] The commencement of this stanza is given in *Johnson's Museum*—

'There wild woods grow,' &c.,

as implying the nature of the scenery in the west. In Wood's *Songs of Scotland*, the reading is—

'Though wild woods grow, and rivers row,
  Wi' monie a hill between,
Baith day and night,' &c.,

evidently an alteration designed to improve the logic of the verse. It appears that both readings are wrong, for in the original manuscript of Burns's contributions to Johnson, in the possession of Archibald Hastie, Esq., the line is written: 'There 's wild woods grow,' &c., as in our text. It is an example of a kind of syllogism occasionally employed by Burns, in which the major proposition seems to be merely expletive. [Another example will serve to bring this peculiarity of composition more distinctly before the mind of the reader:

By Auchtertyre grows the aik,
  On Yarrow banks the birken shaw;
But Phemie was a bonnier lass
  Than braes o' Yarrow ever saw.]

I have been reminded that the idea is not new in verse:

——————'ἐστὶ μάλα πολλὰ μεταξὺ
Οὔρεά τε σκιόεντα, θάλασσά τε ἠχήεσσα.'
Iliad, i. 149.

[2] The first of these stanzas appeared in the third volume of *Johnson's Museum*. Burns's note upon it afterwards was: 'This song I composed out of compliment to Mrs Burns. *N. B.*—It was in the honeymoon.' Two additional stanzas were some years afterwards

Nor was this all; for the same period produced, in honour of Mrs Burns, perhaps the most luxuriantly rich of all his amatory lyrics. We have to suppose the poet in his solitary life at Ellisland, gazing towards the hill of Corsincon, at the head of Nithsdale, beyond which, though at many miles' distance, was the valley in which his heart's idol lived. He ideally beholds his 'blithesome, dancing, sweet young quean, of guileless heart,' in her most characteristic situation, and he bursts out with these glowing verses—

OH, WERE I ON PARNASSUS' HILL!

TUNE—*My Love is lost to me.*

Oh, were I on Parnassus' hill!
Or had of Helicon my fill;
That I might catch poetic skill,
  To sing how dear I love thee.
But Nith maun be my Muse's well,
My Muse maun be thy bonny sel';[1]
On Corsincon I 'll glower and spell,
  And write how dear I love thee.

Then come, sweet Muse, inspire my lay!
For a' the lee-lang simmer's day
I couldna sing, I couldna say,
  How much, how dear I love thee.
I see thee dancing o'er the green,
Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,[2]
Thy tempting lips, thy roguish een—
  By heaven and earth I love thee!

produced by John Hamilton, musicseller in Edinburgh; they are not unworthy of appearing on the same page with those by Burns:

O blaw, ye westlin' winds, blaw saft
  Amang the leafy trees,
Wi' balmy gale, frae hill and dale
  Bring hame the laden bees;
And bring the lassie back to me
  That 's aye sae neat and clean;
Ae smile o' her wad banish care,
  Sae charming is my Jean.

What sighs and vows amang the knowes
  Hae passed atween us twa!
How fond to meet, how wae to part,
  That night she gaed awa'!
The powers aboon can only ken,
  To whom the heart is seen,
That nane can be sae dear to me
  As my sweet lovely Jean.

[1] An anonymous writer in the *Notes and Queries* points out a similar idea to this in Propertius:

'Non hæc Calliope, non hæc mihi cantat Apollo,
Ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.'

[2] Clean in this relation means well-shaped—handsome.

By night, by day, a-field, at hame,
The thoughts of thee my breast inflame;
And aye I muse and sing thy name—
I only live to love thee.
Though I were doomed to wander on
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,
Till my last weary sand was run;
Till then—and then I love thee.

Alas, Clarinda! where was now *your* image? It is but four or five months since he said to you: 'I admire you, I love you as a woman beyond any one in all the circle of creation. . . . . I am yours, Clarinda, for life!'

'Even as one heat another heat expels,
Or as one nail by strength drives out another;
So the remembrance of my former love
Is by a newer object quite forgotten.'

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, 23*d June* 1788.

This letter, my dear sir, is only a business scrap. Mr Miers, profile-painter in your town, has executed a profile of Dr Blacklock for me: do me the favour to call for it, and sit to him yourself for me, which put in the same size as the doctor's. The account of both profiles will be fifteen shillings, which I have given to James Connel, our Mauchline carrier, to pay you when you give him the parcel. You must not, my friend, refuse to sit. The time is short. When I sat to Mr Miers, I am sure he did not exceed two minutes. I propose hanging Lord Glencairn, the doctor, and you in trio over my new chimney-piece that is to be. Adieu! R. B.

One piece of special good-fortune in Burns's situation at Ellisland was his having for his next neighbour, at less than a mile's distance along the bank of the Nith, Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, a man of literary and antiquarian spirit, and of kindly social nature. Riddell possessed a beautiful small estate, with a pleasant mansion romantically situated on a rocky promontory which here produces a bend in the river, and was formerly the site of a small monastic establishment: a long *carse* (alluvial plain) extends to the eastward, bounded by beautiful shrubberies, which nearly reach to Ellisland. The proprietor of *Friars' Carse*

had given Burns a key admitting him to the grounds, and it seems to have been among the agreeable conditions of the poet's life at this happy summer period, when hope was green in his bosom, to wander in these grounds, and muse in a decorated cot or hermitage which their master had raised. On the 28th of June he composed, under the character of a bedesman, or alms-fed recluse—

VERSES IN FRIARS' CARSE HERMITAGE.

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou decked in silken stole,
Grave these maxims on thy soul—
Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Day, how rapid in its flight—
Day, how few must see the night;
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.
Happiness is but a name,
Make content and ease thy aim.
Ambition is a meteor gleam;
Fame a restless, idle dream:
Pleasures, insects on the wing
Round Peace, the tenderest flower of Spring;
Those that sip the dew alone,
Make the butterflies thy own;
Those that would the bloom devour,
Crush the locusts—save the flower.
For the future be prepared,
Guard wherever thou canst guard;
But, thy utmost duly done,
Welcome what thou canst not shun.
Follies past, give thou to air,
Make their consequence thy care:
Keep the name of man in mind,
And dishonour not thy kind.
Reverence with lowly heart,
Him whose wondrous work thou art;
Keep His goodness still in view,
Thy trust—and thy example too.

Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide!
Quod the Bedesman on Nithside.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, 30th June 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—I just now received your brief epistle; and to take vengeance on your laziness, I have, you see, taken a long sheet of writing-paper, and have begun at the top of the page, intending to scribble on to the very last corner.

I am vexed at that affair of the * * *, but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death.[1] I am concerned for the old fellow's exit only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect; for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life that the welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind, benevolent animal, but he is dropped into such a needy situation here in this vexatious world, and has such a whore-son, hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food, that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others that he may look properly to himself. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr Miers for the profile of a Mr H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did I ever give Mr Miers any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will not have any such profile in my possession.

I desired the carrier to pay you; but as I mentioned only fifteen shillings to him, I will rather enclose you a guinea-note. I have it not, indeed, to spare here, as I am only a sojourner in a strange land in this place; but in a day or two I return to Mauchline, and there I have the bank-notes through the house like salt-permits.

There is a great degree of folly in talking unnecessarily of one's private affairs. I have just now been interrupted by one of my new neighbours, who has made himself absolutely contemptible in my eyes by his silly garrulous pruriency. I know it has been a fault of my own too; but from this moment I abjure it as I would the service of hell! Your poets, spendthrifts, and other fools of that kidney, pretend, forsooth, to crack their jokes on prudence; but 'tis a squalid vagabond glorying in his rags. Still, imprudence respecting money-matters is much more pardonable than imprudence respecting character. I have no objection to prefer prodigality to avarice in some few instances; but I appeal to your observation, if you have not met, and often met, with the same disingenuousness, the same hollow-hearted insincerity and

[1] Mr Samuel Mitchelson, W.S., had been Mr Ainslie's master: he died June 21, 1788.

disintegrative depravity of principle, in the hackneyed victims of profusion, as in the unfeeling children of parsimony. I have every possible reverence for the much-talked-of world beyond the grave, and I wish that which piety believes and virtue deserves may be all matter of fact. But in things belonging to and terminating in this present scene of existence, man has serious and interesting business on hand. Whether a man shall shake hands with welcome in the distinguished elevation of respect, or shrink from contempt in the abject corner of insignificance; whether he shall wanton under the tropic of plenty—at least enjoy himself in the comfortable latitudes of easy convenience—or starve in the Arctic Circle of dreary poverty; whether he shall rise in the manly consciousness of a self-approving mind, or sink beneath a galling load of regret and remorse—these are alternatives of the last moment.

You see how I preach. You used occasionally to sermonise too; I wish you would in charity favour me with a sheet full in your own way. I admire the close of a letter Lord Bolingbroke writes to Dean Swift: 'Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely; make an effort to love me with all mine!' Humble servant, and all that trumpery, is now such a prostituted business, that honest Friendship, in her sincere way, must have recourse to her primitive, simple, farewell! R. B.

Mr Peter Hill, who had been Creech's chief assistant last year, was now set up in business for himself, with the afterwards famous Archibald Constable as his apprentice. Burns liked the man for his cheerful, social nature, and had already attained to a certain degree of intimacy with him. Having no similar affection for Creech, he resolved to send to Hill for any books which he might henceforth have occasion for, including, above all, that prime essential of a Scotsman's house-furniture—a family-Bible.

TO MR PETER HILL.

MAUCHLINE, 18*th July* 1788.

You injured me, my dear sir, in your construction of the cause of my silence. From Ellisland in Nithsdale to Mauchline in Kyle is forty-and-five miles. *There*, a house a-building, and farm enclosures and improvements to tend; *here*, a new—not, indeed, so much a *new* as a *young* wife: good God, sir, could my dearest brother expect a regular correspondence from me! . . . I am certain that my liberal-minded and much-respected friend would have acquitted me, though I had obeyed to the very letter that famous statute among the irrevocable decrees of the Medes and Persians, not

to ask petition, for forty days, of either God or man, save thee, O Queen, only!

I am highly obliged to you, my dearest sir, for your kind, your elegant compliments on my becoming one of that most respectable, that truly venerable corps, they who are, without a metaphor, the fathers of posterity. . . .

Your book came safe, and I am going to trouble you with further commissions. I call it troubling you—because I want only BOOKS; the cheapest way the best; so you may have to hunt for them in the evening auctions. I want Smollett's works, for the sake of his incomparable humour. I have already *Roderick Random* and *Humphry Clinker*. *Peregrine Pickle, Launcelot Greaves,* and *Ferdinand Count Fathom,* I still want; but, as I said, the veriest ordinary copies will serve me. I am nice only in the appearance of my poets. I forget the price of *Cowper's Poems,* but I believe I must have them. I saw the other day proposals for a publication, entitled *Banks's New and Complete Christian's Family Bible,* printed for C. Cooke, Paternoster Row, London. He promises at least to give in the work, I think it is three hundred and odd engravings, to which he has put the names of the first artists in London.[1] You will know the character of the performance, as some numbers of it are published: and if it is really what it pretends to be, set me down as a subscriber, and send me the published numbers.

Let me hear from you your first leisure minute, and trust me you shall in future have no reason to complain of my silence. The dazzling perplexity of novelty will dissipate, and leave me to pursue my course in the quiet path of methodical routine.[2]

R. B.

[1] 'Perhaps no set of men more effectually avail themselves of the easy credulity of the public than a certain description of Paternoster-Row booksellers. Three hundred and odd engravings!—and by the first artists in London, too!—no wonder that Burns was dazzled by the splendour of the promise. It is no unusual thing for this class of impostors to illustrate the Holy Scriptures by plates originally engraved for the *History of England;* and I have actually seen subjects designed by our celebrated artist Stothard, from *Clarissa Harlowe* and the *Novelist's Magazine,* converted, with incredible dexterity, by these bookselling Breslaws, into Scriptural embellishments! One of these venders of "Family Bibles" lately called on me, to consult me professionally about a folio engraving he brought with him. It represented Mons. Buffon seated, contemplating various groups of animals that surrounded him: he merely wished, he said, to be informed whether, by unclothing the naturalist, and giving him a rather more resolute look, the plate could not, at a trifling expense, be made to pass for Daniel in the Lions' Den!'—CROMEK.

[2] Mr Cromek has printed only the part of this letter from 'Your book came safe,' and he has unaccountably placed it in connection with a letter of Burns to Peter Hill, dated February 2, 1790.

TO MR GEORGE LOCKHART,

MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

MAUCHLINE, 18*th July* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—I am just going for Nithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my rhyming things for you. The Miss Baillies I have seen in Edinburgh. 'Fair and lovely are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who would not praise thee for these thy gifts in thy goodness to the sons of men!' It needed not your fine taste to admire them. I declare, one day I had the honour of dining at Mr Baillie's, I was almost in the predicament of the children of Israel, when they could not look on Moses' face for the glory that shone in it when he descended from Mount Sinai.

I did once write a poetic address from the Falls of Bruar to his Grace of Athole when I was in the Highlands. When you return to Scotland let me know, and I will send such of my pieces as please myself best. I return to Mauchline in about ten days.

My compliments to Mr Purden. I am, in truth, but at present in haste, yours, R. B.

Burns had never felt the full measure of the beauty of his poems till he heard Mr Aiken read them. Mr Lockhart, of Glasgow, did him a similar service regarding his songs. On hearing him for the first time sing some of these pieces, he exclaimed, with great *naïveté:* 'I'll be hanged if I ever knew half their merit till now!'

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *August* 2, 1788.

HONOURED MADAM—Your kind letter welcomed me yesternight to Ayrshire. I am, indeed, seriously angry with you at the quantum of your luckpenny; but, vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write to you from Nithsdale, and give you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportunity of calling at a post-office once in a fortnight. I am six miles from Dumfries, am scarcely ever in it myself, and as yet have little acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Besides, I am now very busy on my farm, building a dwelling-house; as at present I am almost an evangelical man in Nithsdale, for I have scarce 'where to lay my head.'

There are some passages in your last that brought tears in my eyes. 'The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith.' The repository of these 'sorrows of the

heart' is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum;* and 'tis only a chosen friend, and that, too, at particular sacred times, who dares enter into them—

> 'Heaven oft tears the bosom-chords
> That nature finest strung.'

You will excuse this quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject further, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage belonging to a gentleman in my Nithsdale neighbourhood. They are almost the only favours the Muses have conferred on me in that country. . . .

[Here he transcribed the verses composed in the Friars' Carse Hermitage. *See Antea.*]

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following were the production of yesterday as I jogged through the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intend inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my Excise hopes depend—Mr Graham of Fintry, one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen not only of this country, but, I will dare to say it, of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts 'unhousel'd, unanointed, unaneal'd:'—

> Pity the tuneful Muses' helpless train;
> Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main:
> The world were blest, did bliss on them depend;
> Ah, that 'the friendly e'er should want a friend!'
> The little fate bestows they share as soon;
> Unlike sage, proverb'd Wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
> Let Prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
> Who life and wisdom at one race begun;
> Who feel by reason and who give by rule;
> Instinct 's a brute and Sentiment a fool!
> Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should;*
> We own they 're prudent, but who owns they 're good?
>
> Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye;
> God's image rudely etched on base alloy!
> But come * * * *

Here the Muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow! you vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell. R. B.

Burns when at his farm, was very actively engaged, not merely in its ordinary operations, to all of which he lent his own hands, but in superintending the construction of his new *steading.* According to Allan Cunningham—the poet had to 'perform the

duty of superintendent of the works; to dig the foundations, collect the stones, seek the sand, cart the lime, and see that all was performed according to the specifications: these were the uncouth cares of which he complained.' He would even help in laying the stones of his house. It was a neat cottage, of about fifty feet long, placed near the edge of the *scaur* or broken bank overhanging the Nith. The sitting-room in the east end had a window looking down the valley, and commanding beautiful peeps of the stream. Another room, at the west end, was the *spence*, or room reserved for important occasions. A small kitchen and a bedroom lay between, while in the garret was accommodation for domestics. The whole structure, while marking in some degree the taste of the poet, is yet perfectly suitable in its modesty to the frugal life of a farmer of a hundred acres. On the bank below was a spring of pure water. Assisted by his brother-in-law, Armour, who helped to build the house, Burns fashioned this into a well for the supply of his household. Running back from the house in two lines of building, were a barn, terminating in a stackyard, and a cow-house and stable. Such was the simple establishment in which the great poet of Scotland designed to spend the remainder of his life in industrious and frugal state.

Dr Currie considers it unfortunate for Burns that he was not able to settle at once with his wife upon Ellisland. In visiting her from that place, he had to perform a journey of forty-six miles, which generally required his stopping a night at an inn on the road. Dr Currie says, that on these occasions he sometimes fell into company, and forgot sober resolutions. I am much inclined to think that little harm could arise from a few such rencontres; but it is certainly to be regretted that he did not commence regular housekeeping with his wife at the beginning, as his mind would have thereby been steadied, and he would have had the better chance of forming quiet domestic habits.

It was not till now that any ceremonial took place to signify the union of Burns with his Jean. The communion being administered at Mauchline on the second Sunday of August, there is generally observable about the beginning of that month in the session-books a great clearing of characters; for a repute before society depends in Scotland so much on being admitted to the sacrament, that every person in the least tainted with scandal is anxious to be made presentable on that occasion. The entry in the record regarding our illustrious bard is as follows:—

'1788, *August* 5.—Compeared Robert Burns, with Jean Armour,

his alleged spouse. They both acknowledge their irregular marriage, and their sorrow for that irregularity, and desiring that the Session will take such steps as may seem to them proper, in order to the solemn confirmation of the said marriage. The Session, taking this affair under their consideration, agree that they both be rebuked for this acknowledged irregularity, and that they be solemnly engaged to adhere faithfully to one another as man and wife all the days of their life.

'In regard the Session have a title in law to some fine for behoof of the poor, they agree to refer to Mr Burns his own generosity. The above sentence was accordingly executed, and the Session absolved the said parties from any scandal on this account.

(Signed) WILLIAM AULD, *Moderator*.
ROBERT BURNS.
JEAN ARMOUR.

'Mr Burns gave a guinea-note for behoof of the poor.'

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *August* 10, 1788.

MY MUCH-HONOURED FRIEND—Yours of the 24th June[1] is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife—waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may perhaps be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason—that I do not read your letters. All your epistles, for several months, have cost me nothing except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

Mrs Burns, madam, is the identical woman * * *. When she first found herself 'as women wish to be who love their lords,' as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and their house, but on my rumoured West Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail till I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my *éclatant* return to Mauchline, I was made very

[1] It may be suspected that the date of this letter should be *July* instead of August.

welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery was in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit? * * *

I can easily fancy a more agreeable companion for my journey of life; but, upon my honour, I have never seen the individual instance. * * *

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner for life who could have entered into my favourite studies, relished my favourite authors, &c., without probably entailing on me, at the same time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the other blessed boarding-school acquirements, which (*pardonnez moi, madame*) are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be gentry. * * *

I like your way in your church-yard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength and always an originality that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter in progression by me, to send you when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dis-social, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence. R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 16*th August* 1788.

I am in a fine disposition, my honoured friend, to send you an elegiac epistle, and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian:

> 'Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?
> Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?'

My increasing cares in this as yet strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children—I could indulge these reflections till my humour should ferment into the most acid chagrin, that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down to write to you; as I declare, upon my soul, I always find that the most sovereign balm for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr Miller's to dinner,[1] for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind; from the lady of the house, quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage as a professional man was expected: I for once went agonising over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, independence of spirit, and integrity of soul! In the course of conversation, *Johnson's Musical Museum*, a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning,

'Raving winds around her blowing.'

The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words. 'Mine, madam—they are, indeed, my very best verses:' she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well, 'King's caff is better than ither folks' corn.' I was going to make a New-Testament quotation about 'casting pearls,' but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste. * * *

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial Heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours, and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days, are sold to the minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad, called *The Life and Age of Man*, beginning thus:

'Twas in the sixteen hundredth year
Of God and fifty-three
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testific.'

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The Life and Age of Man*.

It is this way of thinking, it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor miserable children of men. If it is a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

'What truth on earth so precious as the lie?'

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophisings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul

[1] At Dalswinton House.

affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with Heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life? No: to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear madam, you are now more than pleased with the length of my letters. I return to Ayrshire middle of next week: and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest. R. B.

TO MR BEUGO, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, *9th Sept.* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—There is not in Edinburgh above the number of the Graces whose letters would have given me so much pleasure as yours of the 3d instant, which only reached me yesternight.

I am here on my farm, busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose they only know in graces, prayers, &c., and the value of these they estimate, as they do their plaiding webs—by the ell! As for the Muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet. For my old capricious but good-natured hussy of a Muse:—

'By banks of Nith I sat and wept
When Coila I thought on,
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow-trees upon.'

I am generally about half my time in Ayrshire with my 'darling Jean;' and then I, at lucid intervals, throw my horny fist across my be-cobwebbed lyre, much in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning-wheel.

I will send you the *Fortunate Shepherdess* as soon as I return to Ayrshire, for there I keep it with other precious treasure. I shall send it by a careful hand, as I would not for anything it should be mislaid or lost. I do not wish to serve you from any benevolence, or other grave Christian virtue; 'tis purely a selfish gratification of my own feelings whenever I think of you.

You do not tell me if you are going to be married. Depend upon it, if you do not make some foolish choice, it will be a very great improvement on the dish of life. I can speak from experience, though, God knows, my choice was as random as blind-man's buff. . . . .

If your better functions would give you leisure to write me, I should be extremely happy; that is to say, if you neither keep nor look for a regular correspondence. I hate the idea of being obliged to write a letter. I sometimes write a friend twice a week; at other times, once a quarter.

I am exceedingly pleased with your fancy in making the author you mention place a map of Iceland instead of his portrait before his works: 'twas a glorious idea.

Could you conveniently do me one thing?—whenever you finish any head, I should like to have a proof-copy of it. I might tell you a long story about your fine genius; but as what everybody knows cannot have escaped you, I shall not say one syllable about it.

If you see Mr Nasmyth, remember me to him most respectfully, as he both loves and deserves respect: though if he would pay less respect to the mere carcass of greatness, I should think him much nearer perfection. R. B.

Mr Beugo was the engraver of Burns's portrait for the late edition of his Poems. The glorious idea alluded to in the third last paragraph was probably a joke against Creech, who was then about to publish, in one volume, a collection of certain wiry square-toed articles, which he had at various times contributed to the newspapers. The gelidity of his constitution shines in this volume, and must have made the idea of a map of Iceland as a frontispiece appear to Burns the perfection of practical wit.

It would appear that one of the productions of these 'lucid intervals' in Ayrshire was a ballad, which is usually printed under the title of *The Fête Champêtre*. According to the recital of Gilbert Burns: 'When Mr Cunninghame, of Enterkin, came to his estate, two mansion-houses on it, Enterkin and Anbank, were both in a ruinous state. Wishing to introduce himself with some *éclat* to the county, he got temporary erections made on the banks of Ayr, tastefully decorated with shrubs and flowers, for a supper and ball, to which most of the respectable families in the county were invited. It was a novelty, and attracted much notice. A dissolution of parliament was soon expected, and this festivity was thought to be an introduction to a canvass for representing the county. Several other candidates were spoken of, particularly Sir John Whitefoord, then residing at Cloncaird, commonly pronounced Glencaird, and Mr Boswell, the well-known biographer of Dr Johnson. The political views of this festive assemblage, which are alluded to in the ballad, if they ever existed, were, however, laid aside, as Mr Cunninghame did not canvass the county.' By the favour of W. Allason Cunninghame, Esq., son of Mr Cunninghame, of Enterkin,

I learn that this affair must have taken place in summer 1788. Burns's ballad was as follows:—

THE FÊTE CHAMPÊTRE.

TUNE—*Killiecrankie.*

Oh wha will to Saint Stephen's House,
  To do our errands there, man?
Oh wha will to Saint Stephen's House,
  O' th' merry lads o' Ayr, man?
Or will ye send a man-o'-law?
  Or will ye send a sodger?
Or him wha led o'er Scotland a'
  The meikle Ursa-Major?[1]

Come, will ye court a noble lord,
  Or buy a score o' lairds, man?
For worth and honour pawn their word,
  Their vote shall be Glencaird's, man.
Ane gies them coin, ane gies them wine,
  Anither gies them clatter;
Anbank, wha guessed the ladies' taste,
  He gies a Fête Champêtre.

When Love and Beauty heard the news,
  The gay greenwoods amang, man,
Where, gathering flowers and busking bowers,
  They heard the blackbird's sang, man:
A vow, they sealed it with a kiss,
  Sir Politics to fetter,
As theirs alone, the patent-bliss,
  To hold a Fête Champêtre.

Then mounted Mirth, on gleesome wing,
  Ower hill and dale she flew, man;
Ilk wimpling burn, ilk crystal spring,
  Ilk glen and shaw she knew, man:
She summoned every social sprite,
  That sports by wood and water,
On th' bonny banks o' Ayr to meet,
  And keep this Fête Champêtre.

Cauld Boreas, wi' his boisterous crew,
  Were bound to stakes like kye, man;
And Cynthia's car, o' silver fu',
  Clamb up the starry sky, man:

[1] An allusion to the well-known joke of the elder Boswell, who, hearing his son speak of Johnson as a great luminary, quite a constellation, said: 'Yes, *Ursa Major.*'

Reflected beams dwell in the streams,
  Or down the current shatter;
The western breeze steals through the trees
  To view this Fête Champêtre.

How many a robe sae gaily floats!
  What sparkling jewels glance, man!
To Harmony's enchanting notes,
  As moves the mazy dance, man.
The echoing wood, the winding flood,
  Like Paradise did glitter,
When angels met, at Adam's yett, gate
  To hold their Fête Champêtre.

When Politics came there, to mix
  And make his ether-stane, man![1]
He circled round the magic ground,
  But entrance found he nane, man:
He blushed for shame, he quat his name,
  Forswore it, every letter,
Wi' humble prayer to join and share
  This festive Fête Champêtre.

TO MISS CHALMERS, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, *Sept.* 16, 1788.

Where are you?—and how are you?—and is Lady Mackenzie recovering her health?—for I have had but one solitary letter from you. I will not think you have forgot me, madam; and for my part—

> 'When thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
> Skill part from my right hand!'

'My heart is not of that rock, nor my soul careless as that sea.' I do not make my progress among mankind as a bowl does among its fellows—rolling through the crowd without bearing away any mark or impression, except where they hit in hostile collision.

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much *à l'égard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness. I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say more, but so much, as Lady Mackenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest of human kind—unfortunate even in the shades of life—

[1] Alluding to a superstition, which represents adders as forming annually from their slough certain little annular stones of streaked colouring, which are occasionally found, and which are in reality beads fashioned and used by our early ancestors.

when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost anybody I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child! If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert. I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a late important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however, overlooked in fashionable licence, or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLAINY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire, I married my 'Jean.' This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance, perhaps; but I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county. Mrs Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse. I must except also from this last a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly, and all the ballads in the country, as she has (Oh, the partial lover! you will cry) the finest 'wood-note wild' I ever heard.[1] I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honour of a share in your best wishes. She is still at Mauchline, as I am building my house; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect; but I believe in time it may be a saving bargain. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a losing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my Excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set all before your view, whatever disrespect you, in common with the world, have for this business, I know you would approve of my idea.

[1] Mrs Burns is generally allowed to have been a good singer, her voice rising with ease to B natural.

I will make no apology, dear madam, for this egotistic detail; I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at everything dishonest, and the same scorn at everything unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense, are they not EQUALS? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS?

When I may have an opportunity of sending this, Heaven only knows. Shenstone says: 'When one is confined idle within doors by bad weather, the best antidote against *ennui* is to read the letters of or write to one's friends:' in that case, then, if the weather continues thus, I may scrawl you half a quire.

I very lately—namely, since harvest began—wrote a poem, not in imitation, but in the manner, of Pope's *Moral Epistles*. It is only a short essay, just to try the strength of my Muse's pinion in that way. I will send you a copy of it when once I have heard from you. I have likewise been laying the foundation of some pretty large poetic works: how the superstructure will come on, I leave to that great maker and marrer of projects—TIME. Johnson's collection of Scots songs is going on in the third volume; and, of consequence, finds me a consumpt for a great deal of idle metre. One of the most tolerable things I have done in that way is two stanzas I made to an air a musical gentleman of my acquaintance [Captain Riddell, of Glenriddell] composed for the anniversary of his wedding-day, which happens on the 7th of November. Take it as follows:—

THE DAY RETURNS.

TUNE—*Seventh of November.*

The day returns, my bosom burns,
  The blissful day we twa did meet;
Though winter wild in tempest toiled,
  Ne'er summer sun was half sae sweet.
Than a' the pride that loads the tide,
  And crosses o'er the sultry line;
Than kingly robes, than crowns and globes,
  Heaven gave me more—it made thee mine!

While day and night can bring delight,
  Or Nature aught of pleasure give,
While joys above my mind can move,
  For thee, and thee alone, I live.
When that grim foe of life below
  Comes in between to make us part,
The iron hand that breaks our band,
  It breaks my bliss—it breaks my heart!

I shall give over this letter for shame. If I should be seized with a scribbling fit before this goes away, I shall make it another letter; and then you may allow your patience a week's respite between the two. I have not room for more than the old, kind, hearty farewell!

To make some amends, *mes chères mesdames*, for dragging you on to this second sheet, and to relieve a little the tiresomeness of my unstudied and uncorrectible prose, I shall transcribe you some of my late poetic bagatelles; though I have, these eight or ten months, done very little that way. One day, in a hermitage on the banks of Nith, belonging to a gentleman in my neighbourhood, who is so good as give me a key at pleasure, I wrote as follows, supposing myself the sequestered, venerable inhabitant of the lonely mansion. . . . R. B.

In September, the house was approaching completion, and Burns was eager to inhabit at least a portion of it. He thus addressed the worthy joiner at Mauchline, whom he had commissioned to prepare his household furniture:—

TO MR MORRISON, MAUCHLINE.

ELLISLAND, *September* 22, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—Necessity obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plastered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will at furthest be my time, beyond which I cannot stay in this present house. If ever you wish to deserve the blessing of him that was ready to perish; if ever you were in a situation that a little kindness would have rescued you from many evils; if ever you hope to find rest in future states of untried being—get these matters of mine ready. My servant will be out in the beginning of next week for the clock. My compliments to Mrs Morrison. I am, after all my tribulation, dear sir, yours, R. B.

Burns had been told by some of his literary friends, that it was a great error to write in Scotch, seeing that thereby he was cut off from the appreciation of the English public. He was disposed to give way to this hint, and henceforth to compose chiefly in English, or at least to try his hand upon the soft lyres of Twickenham and Richmond, in the hope of succeeding equally well as he had hitherto done upon the rustic reed of Scotland. It seems to have been a great mistake. The flow of versification and the felicity of diction for which Burns's Scottish poems and

songs are remarkable, vanish when he attempts the southern strain. We see this well exemplified in a poem of the present summer, in which he aimed at the style of Pope's *Moral Epistles*, while at the same time he sought to advance his personal fortunes through the medium of a patron.

FIRST EPISTLE TO MR GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

When Nature her great master-piece designed,
And framed her last, best work, the human mind,
Her eye intent on all the mazy plan,
She formed of various parts the various man.

Then first she calls the useful many forth;
Plain plodding industry, and sober worth:
Thence peasants, farmers, native sons of earth,
And merchandise' whole genus take their birth:
Each prudent cit a warm existence finds,
And all mechanics' many-apron'd kinds.
Some other rarer sorts are wanted yet,
The lead and buoy are needful to the net;
The *caput mortuum* of gross desires
Makes a material for mere knights and squires;
The martial phosphorus is taught to flow;
She kneads the lumpish philosophic dough,
Then marks th' unyielding mass with grave designs,
Law, physic, politics, and deep divines;
Last, she sublimes the Aurora of the poles,
The flashing elements of female souls.
The order'd system fair before her stood,
Nature, well pleased, pronounced it very good;
But e'er she gave creating labour o'er,
Half-jest, she tried one curious labour more.
Some spumy, fiery, *ignis fatuus* matter,
Such as the slightest breath of air might scatter;
With arch alacrity and conscious glee
(Nature may have her whim as well as we,
Her Hogarth-art perhaps she meant to shew it),
She forms the thing, and christens it—a Poet,
Creature, though oft the prey of care and sorrow,
When blest to-day, unmindful of to-morrow.
A being formed t' amuse his graver friends,
Admired and praised—and there the homage ends:
A mortal quite unfit for Fortune's strife,
Yet oft the sport of all the ills of life;

Prone to enjoy each pleasure riches give,
Yet haply wanting wherewithal to live;
Longing to wipe each tear, to heal each groan,
Yet frequent all unheeded in his own.
But honest Nature is not quite a Turk,
She laughed at first, then felt for her poor work.
Pitying the propless climber of mankind,
She cast about a standard tree to find;
And, to support his helpless woodbine state,
Attached him to the generous truly great,
A title, and the only one I claim,
To lay strong hold for help on bounteous Graham.

Pity the tuneful Muses' hapless train,
Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main!
Their hearts no selfish stern absorbent stuff,
That never gives—though humbly takes enough;
The little fate allows, they share as soon,
Unlike sage proverb'd wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
The world were blest did bliss on them depend,
Ah, that 'the friendly e'er should want a friend!'
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
Who life and wisdom at one race begun,
Who feel by reason and who give by rule
(Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool!)—
Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should*—
We own they're prudent, but who feels they're good?
Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye!
God's image rudely etched on base alloy!
But come, ye who the godlike pleasure know,
Heaven's attribute distinguished—to bestow!
Whose arms of love would grasp the human race:
Come thou who giv'st with all a courtier's grace;
Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes!
Prop of my dearest hopes for future times.
Why shrinks my soul half-blushing, half-afraid,
Backward, abashed, to ask thy friendly aid?
I know my need, I know thy giving hand,
I crave thy friendship at thy kind command;
But there are such who court the tuneful Nine—
Heavens! should the branded character be mine!—
Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely flows,
Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.
Mark, how their lofty independent spirit
Soars on the spurning wing of injured merit!
Seek not the proofs in private life to find;
Pity the best of words should be but wind!

So to heaven's gate the lark's shrill song ascends,
But grovelling on the earth the carol ends.
In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,
They dun benevolence with shameless front;
Oblige them, patronise their tinsel lays,
They persecute you all your future days!
Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
My horny fist assume the plough again;
The piebald jacket let me patch once more;
On eighteenpence a week I've lived before.
Though, thanks to Heaven, I dare even that last shift!
I trust, meantime, my boon is in thy gift:
That, placed by thee upon the wished-for height,
Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,
My Muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight.

One cannot but feel that, though the bard guards himself against being confounded with the common herd of patronage-seekers, his words truly express somewhat more of a sense of dependence than it is agreeable to contemplate in connection with so proud a name. Anticipation of difficulties had already somewhat 'sicklied o'er the native hue of resolution.'

TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 27*th Sept.* 1788.

I have received twins, dear madam, more than once, but scarcely ever with more pleasure than when I received yours of the 12th instant. To make myself understood: I had wrote to Mr Graham, enclosing my poem addressed to him, and the same post which favoured me with yours brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he had received mine; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was most polite or kind.

Your criticisms, my honoured benefactress, are truly the work of a friend. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed caterpillar critic; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude the *pro* and *con* of an author's merits: they are the judicious observations of animated friendship, selecting the beauties of the piece. I am just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning by three o'clock; for between my wife and my farm is just forty-six miles. As I jogged on in the dark, I was taken with a poetic fit as follows:—

MRS FERGUSSON OF CRAIGDARROCH'S LAMENTATION FOR THE DEATH OF HER SON,

AN UNCOMMONLY PROMISING YOUTH OF EIGHTEEN OR NINETEEN YEARS OF AGE.[1]

Fate gave the word, the arrow sped,
  And pierced my darling's heart;
And with him all the joys are fled
  Life can to me impart.
By cruel hands the sapling drops,
  In dust dishonoured laid:
So fell the pride of all my hopes,
  My age's future shade.

The mother linnet in the brake
  Bewails her ravished young;
So I, for my lost darling's sake,
  Lament the live-day long.
Death! oft I've feared thy fatal blow,
  Now, fond I bare my breast;
Oh, do thou kindly lay me low
  With him I love, at rest!

You will not send me your poetic rambles, but, you see, I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your impromptus give me double pleasure; what falls from your pen can neither be unentertaining in itself, nor indifferent to me.

The one fault you found is just, but I cannot please myself in an emendation.

What a life of solicitude is the life of a parent! You interested me much in your young couple.

I would not take my folio paper for this epistle, and now I repent it. I am so jaded with my dirty long journey, that I was afraid to drawl into the essence of dulness with anything larger than a quarto, and so I must leave out another rhyme of this morning's manufacture.

I will pay the sapientipotent George most cheerfully, to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire. R. B.

[1] 'Died here on Monday last [Nov. 19, 1787], James Fergusson, Esq., younger of Craigdarroch. The worth of this truly amiable and much-lamented youth can best be estimated by a sketch given of him on his leaving Glasgow college in May last: "Of all the young men of this age I have ever known, he is by much the most promising. His abilities are equal to anything he chooses to undertake. His understanding is clear and penetrating, and readily comprehends the most abstract subjects. His memory is retentive. He speaks with fluency and perspicuity; he writes with neatness and accuracy. No one can exceed him in the assiduity of his application, and he persists in it with the utmost steadiness, in spite of every allurement. United with all these shining qualifications, he discovers the most gentle temper, simple manners, and the amiable modesty of youth."'—*Newspaper Obituary.*

It is a curious circumstance regarding the brief poem conveyed by this letter, that a copy of it in the possession of Mr Allason Cunninghame of Logan House, Ayrshire, is understood by that gentleman's family to have been sent to his grandmother, Burns's early patron, Mrs General Stewart of Afton, as a deploration of the death of her only son, Alexander Gordon Stewart, who died at a military academy at Strasburg, the 5th December 1787. Allan Cunningham speaks of a copy of the poem in his possession bearing a note by the author, which shews that he really had endeavoured to turn this piece to the account of gratifying two friends. '*The Mother's Lament*,' he says, 'was composed partly with a view to Mrs Fergusson of Craigdarroch, and partly to the worthy patroness of my early muse, Mrs Stewart of Afton.' We may suppose that the parity of the two cases, and their nearness in point of time, had produced but one indivisible impression in the mind of the bard. Yet there is reason to believe that, in his complaisance towards his friends, he was somewhat over-eager to gratify them with poetical compliments, and oftener than once caused one to pay a double debt. We shall find that the little poem beginning, *Sensibility, how charming*, was first written on certain experiences of Mrs M'Lehose, and sent to her, but afterwards addressed to 'my dear and much-honoured friend, Mrs Dunlop.' So the reader will perceive that even Burns had his little *mystères d'atelier*.

TO MR PETER HILL.

MAUCHLINE, 1*st October* 1788.

I have been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the *Address to Loch Lomond* you were so obliging as to send to me.[1] Were I impannelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be 'Guilty! A poet of Nature's making!' It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favourite classic author,

[1] '*Address to Loch Lomond, a Poem.* 1s. 6d. sewed. Hill.' *Scots Magazine publication list*, Sep. 1788.

'The poem entitled *An Address to Loch Lomond*, is said to be written by a gentleman now one of the masters of the High School at Edinburgh, and the same who translated the beautiful story of the *Paria*, as published in the *Bee* of Dr Anderson.'—CURRIE (1799).

The author was Dr Cririe, afterwards minister of Dalton, in Dumfriesshire. He published, in 1803, *Scottish Scenery, or Sketches in Verse*—a handsome quarto of poetry and notes, including the *Address to Loch Lomond*. Dr Cririe died in 1835.

in his own walks of study and composition, before him as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have at half a glance guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother-poet forgive me, if I venture to hint that his imitation of that immortal bard is in two or three places rather more servile than such a genius as his required?—*e. g.*

'To soothe the maddening passions all to peace.'
Address.

'To soothe the throbbing passions into peace.'
THOMSON.

I think the *Address* is in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the *Seasons*. Like Thomson, too, he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading: in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but, like a true poet of Nature's making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only I do not altogether like—

——————'Truth,
The soul of every song that 's nobly great.'

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is nobly great. Perhaps I am wrong; this may be but a prose criticism. Is not the phrase in line 7, page 6, 'Great lake,' too much vulgarised by everyday language for so sublime a poem?

'Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,'

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration of a comparison with other lakes is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader's ideas must sweep the

'Winding margin of an hundred miles.'

The perspective that follows mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digression on the yew-tree—'Ben Lomond's lofty, cloud-enveloped head,' &c., are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject which has been often tried, yet our poet in his grand picture has interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original:

——————'The gloom
Deep-seamed with frequent streaks of moving fire.'

In his preface to the storm, 'the glens how dark between,' is noble Highland landscape! The 'rain ploughing the red mould,' too, is beautifully fancied. 'Ben Lomond's lofty, pathless top,' is a good expression; and the surrounding view from it is truly great: the

——————'Silver mist,
Beneath the beaming sun,'

is well described; and here he has contrived to enliven his poem

with a little of that passion which bids fair, I think, to usurp the modern Muses altogether. I know not how far this episode is a beauty upon the whole, but the swain's wish to carry 'some faint idea of the vision bright,' to entertain her 'partial listening ear,' is a pretty thought. But in my opinion the most beautiful passages in the whole poem are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Loch Lomond's 'hospitable flood;' their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, diving, &c., and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to anything in the *Seasons*. The idea of 'the floating tribes distant seen, far glistering to the moon,' provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. 'The howling winds,' the 'hideous roar' of 'the white cascades,' are all in the same style.

I forget that while I am thus holding forth with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must, however, mention that the last verse of the sixteenth page is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must, likewise, notice that beautiful paragraph beginning, 'The gleaming lake,' &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the last two paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began—I should like to know who the author is; but whoever he be, please present him with my grateful thanks for the entertainment he has afforded me.

A friend of mine desired me to commission for him two books—*Letters on the Religion Essential to Man*, a book you sent me before; and *The World Unmasked, or the Philosopher the Greatest Cheat*. Send me them by the first opportunity. The Bible you sent me is truly elegant: I only wish it had been in two volumes.

R. B.

The approach of the centenary of the landing of King William at Torbay was now exciting some sensation in the country. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was pleased to appoint Wednesday, the 5th of November, to be observed as 'a day of solemn thanksgiving for that most glorious event—the Revolution;' and it was so observed accordingly. In Burns's parish, Dunscore, the clergyman was a zealous Whig in the sense of the word in that day, sympathising strongly on religious grounds with the doings of 1688–9. The poet, whose leanings, as we have seen, were in the opposite direction, disliked the Calvinism of Mr Kirkpatrick, and was particularly wroth with the discourse which he uttered on this occasion. So earnestly did he feel upon the subject, that he sent a letter in the contrary spirit to a London newspaper.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STAR.

November 8, 1788.

SIR—Notwithstanding the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectarians have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us—still, the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, and insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shews that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind who is undone—the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes—who but sympathises with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother? We forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgment to the Author of all Good for the consequent blessings of the glorious Revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious; to it we are, likewise, indebted for the present royal family, the ruling features of whose administration have ever been mildness to the subject and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the House of Stuart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils; and we may bless God for all His goodness to us as a nation, without at the same time cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas and made attempts that most of us would have done had we been in their situation.

'The bloody and tyrannical House of Stuart,' may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present royal family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stuarts more attentive to their subjects' rights? Might not the epithets of 'bloody and tyrannical' be, with at least equal justice, applied to the House of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors.

The simple state of the case, sir, seems to be this:—At that period the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was, like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries

enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science which had lately dawned over Europe—the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people; with us, luckily, the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but, likewise, happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stuarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless God, but cannot join in the ridicule against them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone of exigency; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: who would believe, sir, that in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people under our national protection should complain, not against our monarch and a few favourite advisers, but against our whole legislative body, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the House of Stuart? I will not, I cannot enter into the merits of the case; but I daresay the American Congress in 1776 will be allowed to be as able and as enlightened as the English Convention was in 1688; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed House of Stuart.

To conclude, sir; let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman) who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.

R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP, AT MOREHAM MAINS.

MAUCHLINE, 13*th November* 1788.

MADAM—I had the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women, because they are weak—if it be so, poets must be weaker still; for Misses R. and K., and Miss G. M'K., with their flattering attentions and artful compliments absolutely turned my head. I own that they did not lard me over as many a poet does his patron; but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate inuendoes of compliment, that if it had not been for a lucky recollection how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked upon myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my Orientalisms of applause over-against the finest quey[1] in Ayrshire which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm-stock. As it was on Hallow-day,[2] I am determined annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I will take the first conveniency to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship, under the guarantee of the major's hospitality. There will soon be threescore-and-ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a happy day of 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul.' R. B.

TO DR BLACKLOCK.

MAUCHLINE, *November* 15, 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—As I hear nothing of your motions but that you are or were out of town, I do not know where this may find you, or whether it will find you at all. I wrote you a long letter, dated from the land of Matrimony, in June; but either it had not found you, or what I dread more, it found you or Mrs Blacklock in too precarious a state of health and spirits to take notice of an idle packet.

I have done many little things for Johnson since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and I have finished one piece in the way of Pope's *Moral Epistles*;[3] but from your silence I have everything to fear, so I have only sent you two melancholy things, which I tremble lest they should too well suit the tone of your present feelings.

[1] A young heifer. [2] All Saints' Day, old style.

[3] The *First Epistle to Mr Graham of Fintry*.

In a fortnight I move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale; till then, my direction is at this place; after that period, it will be at Ellisland, near Dumfries. It would extremely oblige me, were it but half a line, to let me know how you are, and where you are. Can I be indifferent to the fate of a man to whom I owe so much—a man whom I not only esteem but venerate?

My warmest good wishes and most respectful compliments to Mrs Blacklock and Miss Johnson, if she is with you.

I cannot conclude without telling you, that I am more and more pleased with the step I took respecting 'my Jean.' Two things, from my happy experience, I set down as apophthegms in life —A wife's head is immaterial compared with her heart; and— 'Virtue's (for wisdom, what poet pretends to it?) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' Adieu! R. B.

One of the pieces enclosed was *The Mother's Lament for the Death of her Son.* The other was

THE LAZY MIST.

TUNE—*The Lazy Mist.*

The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill,
Concealing the course of the dark-winding rill;
How languid the scenes, late so sprightly, appear!
As Autumn to Winter resigns the pale year.
The forests are leafless, the meadows are brown,
And all the gay foppery of Summer is flown:
Apart let me wander, apart let me muse,
How quick Time is flying, how keen Fate pursues!

How long I have lived—but how much lived in vain!
How little of life's scanty span may remain!
What aspects Old Time, in his progress, has worn!
What ties cruel Fate in my bosom has torn!
How foolish, or worse, till our summit is gained!
And downward, how weakened, how darkened, how pained!
This life 's not worth having with all it can give—
For something beyond it poor man sure must live.

TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER.

MAUCHLINE, *November* 15, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—I have sent you two more songs. If you have got any tunes, or anything to correct, please send them by return of the carrier.

I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will very probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your

country, and I am certain posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly, and your name shall be immortal.

I am preparing a flaming preface for your third volume. I see every day new musical publications advertised; but what are they? Gaudy, painted butterflies of a day, and then vanish for ever; but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of time.

Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devotion? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as whether she be rather black or fair, plump or thin, short or tall, &c.; and choose your air, and I shall task my Muse to celebrate her. R. B.

The bachelor-life of Burns was now drawing to a close. His new house proving wholly unready for the reception of his wife, he had obtained temporary accommodation for her at a neighbouring farm. Accordingly, in the first week of December, he conducted Mrs Burns to the banks of the Nith. During the preceding week, two servant-lads and a servant-girl had migrated thither from Mauchline, with some cart-loads of the plenishing made by Morrison; besides, I presume, a handsome four-posted bed, which Mrs Dunlop had contributed as her marriage-gift. The servant-lass, named Elizabeth Smith, still lives at Irvine (1851). She reports that Mrs Burns was anxious, on going into a district where she was wholly a stranger, to obtain the services of a young woman whom she already knew. Elizabeth was engaged accordingly; but not till her father, in his anxiety for her moral welfare, had exacted a formal promise from Burns to keep a strict watch over her conduct, and, in particular, to exercise her duly in the Catechism—in both of which points, she admits, he was most faithful to his promise.

About a mile below Ellisland, there is a small tract of ground which has once been encircled by the waters of the Nith, partly through natural channels, and partly through an artificial trench. Here rises a small old dismantled tower, with more modern buildings adjoining to it on two of its sides—the whole forming the farm-buildings of *The Isle;* for such is the name of the place, still retained, although one of the ancient water-courses is now only a rushy piece of ground. The place, which has an antiquated, and even somewhat romantic appearance, was then leased by Mr Newall, writer in Dumfries, whose family had lived in it during the summer, but only for a short time, in consequence of certain nocturnal sounds in the old tower having led to a belief that it

was haunted. What added a little, or perhaps not a little, to the *eeriness* of the spot, was that the old burying-ground of Dunscore, containing the sepulchre of the dreaded persecutor, Grierson of Lagg, was in the immediate neighbourhood. Such was the 'moated grange' at which the illustrious poet welcomed home the mistress of his heart—the fascinating, never-to-be-forgotten Jean Armour.

We may well believe that it was a time of great happiness to Burns when he first saw his mistress installed in her little mansion, and felt himself the master of a household, however humble—looked up to by a wife as 'the goodman,' and by a host of dependents as 'the master.' Who can refrain from sympathising with the great ill-requited poet in this brief exception from a painful life? According to Dr Currie:

'Animated sentiments of any kind almost always give rise in our poet to some production of his Muse. His sentiments on this occasion were in part expressed by the following vigorous and characteristic, though not very delicate verses: they are in imitation of an old ballad:—

I hae a wife o' my ain,
  I'll partake wi' naebody;
I'll tak cuckold frae nane,
  I'll gie cuckold to naebody.

I hae a penny to spend,
  There—thanks to naebody;
I hae naething to lend,
  I'll borrow frae naebody.

I am naebody's lord,
  I'll be slave to naebody;
I hae a guid braid sword,
  I'll tak dunts frae naebody. blows

I'll be merry and free,
  I'll be sad for naebody;
If naebody care for me,
  I'll care for naebody.'[1]

[1] Phenomenon as Burns was, fêted in society, and universally famed, he is little spoken of in the contemporary journals, amongst which it was not then the fashion so much as now to refer to the doings of individuals. On the 28th of November 1788, the *Edinburgh Advertiser* has a paragraph about him:

'Burns, the *Ayrshire Bard*, is now enjoying the sweets of retirement at his farm. Burns, in thus retiring, has acted wisely. Stephen Duck, the *Poetical Thresher*, by his ill-advised patrons, was made a parson. The poor man, hurried out of his proper element, found himself quite unhappy; became insane; and with his own hands, it is said, ended his life. Burns, with propriety, has resumed the *flail*—but we hope he has not thrown away the *quill*.'

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 17*th December* 1788.

MY DEAR HONOURED FRIEND—Yours, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. 'Almost blind and wholly deaf,' are melancholy news of human nature; but when told of a much-loved and honoured friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part, and gratitude on mine, began a tie which has gradually entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom, and I tremble at the omens of your late and present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But, be that as it may, the heart of the man and the fancy of the poet are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods and picking up grubs; not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards—creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time. If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, madam, for I will make my threatening good. I am to be at the New-year-Day fair of Ayr; and, by all that is sacred in the world, friend, I will come and see you!

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old school-fellow and friend was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world! They spoil these 'social offsprings of the heart.' Two veterans of the 'men of the world' would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase 'auld lang syne' exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr Ker[1] will save you the postage.

AULD LANG SYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne?

[1] Mr Ker was the postmaster in Edinburgh—a very different kind of official from what have since ruled in the same chair. This worthy man was always ready to frank a letter for a friend. Strange stories are told of weighty packets—one, it is said, containing a pair of buckskin-breeches for a sportsman in the Highlands—passing free through the post-office in his day.

CHORUS.

For auld lang syne, my dear,
  For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
  For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes,
  And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we've wandered monie a weary foot,
  Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,
  Frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roared,
  Sin' auld lang syne.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere, companion
  And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid willie-waught, draught
  For auld lang syne.

And surely you'll be your pint-stoup,
  And surely I'll be mine;[1]
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
  For auld lang syne.

Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment! There is more of the fire of native genius in it than in half-a-dozen of modern English Bacchanalians! Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas, which please me mightily:—

MY BONNY MARY.[2]

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
  And fill it in a silver tassie; cup
That I may drink before I go,
  A service to my bonny lassie.

[1] At a festival in honour of Burns, lately held in Boston, United States, an Irish gentleman said: 'He felt much inclined to claim the poet as an Irishman, but the attempt would be vain: one of the best known of his lyrics would detect him at once—

"And surely you'll be your pint-stoup,
And surely I'll be mine!"

There was Burns, in the characteristic spirit of national thrift, settling the reckoning, and upon condition, too, that you were to pay for the first pint-stoup. An Irishman would never have thought of that.'—*London newspaper*, March 1851.

[2] This song may be effectively sung to one of the numerous sets of the Highland Laddie, which the reader will find in *Johnson's Musical Museum*.

The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith,
  Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the Ferry;
The ship rides by the Berwick-Law,[1]
  And I maun leave my bonny Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
  The glittering spears are rankèd ready;
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
  The battle closes thick and bloody;
But it 's not the roar o' sea or shore
  Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
Nor shouts o' war that 's heard afar—
  It 's leaving thee, my bonny Mary.

R. B.

Burns came to indulge in little mystifications respecting his songs. Though he here speaks of *Auld Lang Syne* as an old fragment, and afterwards communicated it to George Thomson, with an expression of self-congratulation on having been so fortunate as to recover it from an old man's singing, the second and third verses—those expressing the recollections of youth, and certainly the finest of the set—and oh how fine!—are by himself. So also of *Go fetch to me a pint of wine,* he afterwards acknowledged that only the first verse (four lines) was old, the rest his own. The old verse was probably the same with one which occurs near the close of a homely ballad, printed in Hogg and Motherwell's edition of Burns, as preserved by Mr Peter Buchan, who further communicates that the ballad was composed in 1636, by Alexander Lesly of Edin, on Doveran side, grandfather to the celebrated Archbishop Sharpe:—

'Ye 'll bring me here a pint of wine,
  A server and a silver tassie,
That I may drink, before I gang,
  A health to my ain bonny lassie.'

The fact of Burns pitching upon this one fine stanza of an old ballad as a foundation for a new song, shews expressively the apt sense he had of all that was beautiful in poetry, and how ready his imagination was to take wing upon the slightest command.

[1] North Berwick-Law, a conical hill near the shore of the Firth of Forth, very conspicuous at Edinburgh, from which it is distant about twenty miles.

TO MR JOHN TENNANT.[1]

December 22, 1788.

I yesterday tried my cask of whisky for the first time, and I assure you it does you great credit. It will bear five waters, strong, or six, ordinary toddy. The whisky of this country is a most rascally liquor; and, by consequence, only drunk by the most rascally part of the inhabitants. I am persuaded, if you once get a footing here, you might do a great deal of business in the way of consumpt; and should you commence distiller again, this is the native barley country. I am ignorant if, in your present way of dealing, you would think it worth your while to extend your business so far as this country-side. I write you this on the account of an accident, which I must take the merit of having partly designed to. A neighbour of mine, a John Currie, miller in Carse-mill—a man who is, in a word, a 'very' good man, even for a £500 bargain—he and his wife were in my house the time I broke open the cask. They keep a country public-house, and sell a great deal of foreign spirits, but all along thought that whisky would have degraded their house. They were perfectly astonished at my whisky, both for its taste and strength; and, by their desire, I write you to know if you could supply them with liquor of an equal quality, and what price. Please write me by first post, and direct to me at Ellisland, near Dumfries. If you could take a jaunt this way yourself, I have a spare spoon, knife and fork, very much at your service. My compliments to Mrs Tennant, and all the good folks in Glenconner and Barquharry. R. B.

LINES WRITTEN IN FRIARS' CARSE HERMITAGE.

Extended Copy.

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these counsels on thy soul.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;[2]
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.

[1] If this is rightly addressed, it might refer to a different person from the Tennant of Glenconner, to whom Burns wrote a rhymed epistle (iii. 33), as the latter is called 'Jamie.' Perhaps John was a brother, engaged in business as a distiller.

[2] In the shorter copy, an additional couplet is here inserted—

Day, how rapid in its flight!
Day, how few must see the night!

As Youth and Love with sprightly dance,
Beneath thy morning-star advance,
Pleasure with her siren air
May delude the thoughtless pair;
Let Prudence bless Enjoyment's cup,
Then raptured sip, and sip it up.

As thy day grows warm and high,
Life's meridian flaming nigh,
Dost thou spurn the humble vale?
Life's proud summits wouldst thou scale?
Check thy climbing step, elate,
Evils lurk in felon wait:
Dangers, eagle-pinioned, bold,
Soar around each cliffy hold,
While cheerful peace, with linnet song,
Chants the lowly dells among.

As the shades of evening close,
Beck'ning thee to long repose;
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-nook of ease;
There ruminate with sober thought,
On all thou 'st seen, and heard, and wrought,
And teach the sportive younkers round,
Saws of experience, sage and sound.
Say, man's true genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of his fate,
Is not—art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?[1]
Did many talents gild thy span?
Or frugal Nature grudge thee one?
Tell them, and press it on their mind,
As thou thyself must shortly find,
The smile or frown of awful Heaven
To virtue or to vice is given.
Say, to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies;
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways
Lead to be wretched, vile, and base.

Thus resigned and quiet, creep
To the bed of lasting sleep;

[1] Variation—

Say, man's true genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of their fate,
The important query of their state,
Is not—art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Wast thou cottager or king,
Peer or peasant?—no such thing!
Did many talents, &c.

Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake,
Night, where dawn shall never break,
Till future life, future no more,
To light and joy the good restore,
To light and joy unknown before.

Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide!
Quod the Bedesman of Nithside!

This extended copy of the lines for Friars' Carse Hermitage was produced in December. We agree with Allan Cunningham in seeing in this second effort a proof of the comparative labour which Burns encountered in attempting to compose in pure English. The restricted religious views of the poet will be remarked.[1]

TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

ELLISLAND [*December*], 1788.

I have not room, my dear friend, to answer all the particulars of your last kind letter. I shall be in Edinburgh on some business very soon; and as I shall be two days, or perhaps three, in town, we shall discuss matters *vivâ voce*. My knee, I believe, will never be entirely well; and an unlucky fall this winter has made it still worse. I well remember the circumstance you allude to respecting Creech's opinion of Mr Nicol; but as the first gentleman owes me still about fifty pounds, I dare not meddle in the affair.

It gave me a very heavy heart to read such accounts of the consequence of your quarrel with that puritanic, rotten-hearted, hell-commissioned scoundrel, A——. If, notwithstanding your unprecedented industry in public, and your irreproachable conduct in private life, he still has you so much in his power, what ruin may he not bring on some others I could name?

Many and happy returns of seasons to you, with your dearest and worthiest friend, and the lovely little pledge of your happy union. May the great Author of life, and of every enjoyment that can render life delightful, make her that comfortable blessing to you both which you so ardently wish for, and which, allow me to say, you so well deserved! Glance over the foregoing verses, and let me have your blots. Adieu! R. B.

[1] A pane of the hermitage window, on which he had inscribed some of the lines with a diamond, was removed on a change of proprietors; and being brought to sale at the death of an old lady in 1835, was purchased for five guineas.

On New-year's morning 1789, Gilbert Burns thus affectionately addressed his brother:

MOSSGIEL, 1*st Jan.* 1789.

DEAR BROTHER—I have just finished my New-year's Day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, 'through the dark postern of time long elapsed,' I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the GOD of SEASONS is to us, and that, however some clouds may seem to lower over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well.

Your mother and sisters, with Robert the second, join me in the compliments of the season to you and Mrs Burns, and beg you will remember us in the same manner to William the first time you see him. I am, dear brother, yours, GILBERT BURNS.

The poet on the same day thus addressed one of the most valued of his friends:

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *New-year-day Morning*, 1789.

This, dear madam, is a morning of wishes, and would to God that I came under the apostle James's description!—*the prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* In that case, madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings: everything that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian, that I approve set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery.

This day—the first Sunday of May—a breezy, blue-skied noon some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of autumn—these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday.

I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the Spectator, *The Vision of Mirza;* a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: 'On the 5th day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy,* after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdad, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer.'

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices

in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or wo beyond death and the grave! R. B.

ELEGY ON THE YEAR 1788.

Jan. 1, 1789.

For Lords or Kings I dinna mourn,
E'en let them die—for that they're born:
But oh! prodigious to reflec'!
A towmont, sirs, is gane to wreck! — twelvemonth
Oh Eighty-eight, in thy sma' space
What dire events hae taken place!
Of what enjoyments thou hast reft us!
In what a pickle thou hast left us!

The Spanish empire's tint a head,[1] — lost
And my auld teethless Bawtie's[2] dead;
The tulzie's sair 'tween Pitt and Fox, — fight
And our guidwife's wee birdie cocks;
The tane is game, a bluidie devil,
But to the hen-birds unco civil:
The tither 's something dour o' treadin',
But better stuff ne'er clawed a midden.
Ye ministers, come mount the pu'pit,
And cry till ye be hearse and roopit,
For Eighty-eight he wished you weel,
And gied ye a' baith gear and meal; — money
E'en monie a plack, and monie a peck, — coin
Ye ken yoursel's, for little feck! . . .

[1] Charles III., king of Spain, died on the 13th of December 1788.

[2] A generic familiar name for a dog in Scotland.

Observe the very nowt and sheep, cattle
How dowf and dowie now they creep: dull
Nay, even the yirth itsel' does cry,
For Embro' wells are grutten dry.[1] wept

Oh Eighty-nine, thou 's but a bairn,
And no owre auld, I hope, to learn!
Thou beardless boy, I pray tak care,
Thou now has got thy daddy's chair,
Nae hand-cuffed, muzzled, hap-shackled Regent,[2]
But, like himsel', a full free agent.
Be sure ye follow out the plan
Nae waur than he did, honest man!
As muckle better as you can.

A letter to Dr Moore acquaints us with the views of Burns at this time. Already fearful about his farm, he was using influence to obtain an Excise appointment for the district in which he resided. He develops to the amiable novelist his opinions as to literary labour, which are remarkably sound and judicious, and his desire to continue in the worship of the Muse, but not to be too eager for a reappearance before the public.

TO DR MOORE.

ELLISLAND, *4th Jan.* 1789.

SIR—As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary-sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian Colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have at last got some business with you, and business-letters are written by the style-book. I say my business is with you, sir; for you never had any with me, except the business that benevolence has in the mansion of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late *éclat* was owing to the singularity of my situation, and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface to my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from nature to the poetic character. I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude to learn the Muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by Him 'who forms the secret bias of the soul;' but I as firmly believe

[1] The Edinburgh newspapers of this period contain many references to a scarcity of water, in consequence of severe frost.

[2] The king having shewn symptoms of unsound mind in November, the public was at this time agitated with discussions as to the choice of a regent.

that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains—at least, I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day—a day that may never arrive; but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try—for until trial it is impossible to know—whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses in a good measure the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend, not only of abilities to judge, but with good-nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I enclose you an essay of mine, in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the Epistle addressed to R. G., Esq., or Robert Graham of Fintry, Esq., a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story; and to give you the one, I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of Mr Creech's ingenuous fair-dealing to me. He kept me hanging about Edinburgh from the 7th August 1787 until the 13th April 1788, before he would condescend to give me a statement of affairs: nor had I got it even then, but for an angry letter I wrote him, which irritated his pride. 'I could' not 'a tale,' but a detail 'unfold;' but what am I that should speak against the Lord's anointed Bailie of Edinburgh?

I believe I shall in whole, £100 copyright included, clear about £400 some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare. I give you this information, but I give it to yourself only; for I am still much in the gentleman's mercy. Perhaps I injure the man in the idea I am sometimes tempted to have of him: God forbid I should! A little time will try, for in a month I shall go to town to wind up the business, if possible.

To give the rest of my story in brief: I have married 'my Jean,' and taken a farm. With the first step, I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother who supports my aged mother; another still younger brother, and three sisters in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about £180 to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much: I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give

myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part: I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour might help to smooth matters at the *grand reckoning*. There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy: I have an Excise-officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr Graham, who is one of the commissioners of Excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a Treasury-warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c.

Thus, secure of a livelihood, 'to thee, sweet Poetry, delightful maid,' I would consecrate my future days. R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *January* 6, 1789.

Many happy returns of the season to you, my dear sir. May you be comparatively happy, up to your comparative worth, among the sons of men; which wish would, I am sure, make you one of the most blest of the human race.

I do not know if passing a 'writer to the Signet' be a trial of scientific merit, or a mere business of friends and interest. However it be, let me quote you my two favourite passages, which, though I have repeated them ten thousand times, still they rouse my manhood, and steel my resolution like inspiration:

> ————On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man!—*Young.*

> 'Hear, Alfred, hero of the state,
> Thy genius Heaven's high will declare;
> The triumph of the truly great
> Is never, never to despair!
> Is never to despair.'—*Masque of Alfred.*

I grant you enter the lists of life to struggle for bread, business, notice, and distinction, in common with hundreds. But who are they? Men like yourself, and of that aggregate body your compeers, seven-tenths of them come short of your advantages, natural and accidental; while two of those that remain, either neglect their parts, as flowers blooming in a desert, or misspend their strength like a bull goring a bramble-bush.

But to change the theme: I am still catering for Johnson's publication; and among others, I have brushed up the following old favourite song a little, with a view to your worship. I have only altered a word here and there; but if you like the humour of it, we shall think of a stanza or two to add to it.[1] R. B.

[1] The name of the song here alluded to has not been ascertained.

APPENDIX.

No. 11 (p. 22).—ADDITIONAL STANZAS OF THE VISION, &c.

A MANUSCRIPT of ten leaves, in Burns's handwriting, was till lately in possession of William Allason Cunninghame, Esq., of Logan House, grandson of Mrs General Stewart of Stair. It contains *The Vision* unabridged, as it stood in 1786—*The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast—The Lass of Ballochmyle—My Nanie, O—Handsome Nell—Song in the Character of a Ruined Farmer—Song, Though Cruel Fate should bid us Part*—and *Misgivings of Despondency on the Approach of the Gloomy Monarch of the Grave;* all of them being poems which did not appear in the first edition, but most of which were inserted in the Edinburgh, or second edition. From allusions, the MS. was undoubtedly written after July 1786, and before the Edinburgh edition came out. It seems to be the MS. which Burns sent to Mrs Stewart of Stair, when contemplating his West India voyage (vol. i. p. 306). By the liberality of Mr Dick, bookseller, Ayr, present proprietor of the MS., we are enabled to present such portions of its contents as have not seen the light:

ADDITIONAL STANZAS OF 'THE VISION.'

After 18th stanza of printed copies:

With secret throes I marked that earth,
That cottage, witness of my birth;
And near I saw, bold issuing forth
In youthful pride,
A Lindsay, race of noble worth,
Famed far and wide.

Where, hid behind a spreading wood,
An ancient Pict-built mansion stood,
I spied, among an angel brood,
A female pair;
Sweet shone their high maternal blood,
And father's air.[1]

[1] Sundrum.—*B.* Mr Hamilton of Sundrum was married to a sister of Colonel Montgomery of Coilsfield; consequently, Burns felt a great interest in the family. The female pair were Misses Lillias and Margaret Hamilton, the latter of whom still lives (1851).

An ancient tower[1] to memory brought
How Dettingen's bold hero fought;
Still far from sinking into nought,
It owns a lord
Who 'far in western'[2] climates fought,
With trusty sword.

There, where a sceptred Pictish shade
Stalked round his ashes lowly laid,
I saw a martial race portrayed
In colours strong;[3]
Bold, sodger-featured, undismayed,
They stalked along.

Among the rest I well could spy
One gallant, graceful, martial boy,
The sodger sparkled in his eye,
A diamond water;
I blest that noble badge with joy
That owned me *frater*.[4]

After the 20th stanza:

Near by arose a mansion fine,[5]
The seat of many a muse divine;
Not rustic muses such as mine,
With holly crowned,
But th' ancient, tuneful, laurelled Nine,
From classic ground.

I mourned the card that Fortune dealt,
To see where bonny Whitefoords dwelt;[6]
But other prospects made me melt,
That village near;[7]
There Nature, Friendship, Love I felt,
Fond-mingling dear.

[1] Stair.—*B.*

[2] These words are written over the original in another hand.

[3] The Montgomeries of Coilsfield.

[4] Captain James Montgomery, Master of St James's Lodge, Torbolton, to which the author has the honour to belong.—*B.*

[5] Auchinleck.—*B.* The poet here pays a compliment to the Boswell family, and particularly to the biographer of Johnson.

[6] Ballochmyle. The Whitefoords were at this time parting with the property.

[7] Mauchline.

Hail! Nature's pang, more strong than death!
Warm friendship's glow, like kindling wrath!
Love, dearer than the parting breath
Of dying friend!
'Not even'[1] with life's wild devious path,
Your force shall end!

The power that gave the soft alarms,
In blooming Whitefoord's rosy charms,
Still threats the tiny-feathered arms,
The barbèd dart,
While lovely Wilhelmina warms
The coldest heart.[2]

After the 21st:

Where Lugar leaves his moorland plaid,[3]
Where lately Want was idly laid,
I markèd busy, bustling Trade,
In fervid flame,
Beneath a patroness's aid,
Of noble name;

While countless hills I could survey,
And countless flocks as well as they;
But other scenes did charms display,
That better please,
Where polished manners dwelt with Gray
In rural ease.[4]

Where Cessnock pours with gurgling sound,[5]
And Irwine, marking out the bound,
Enamoured of the scenes around,
Slow runs his race,
A name I doubly honoured found,[6]
With knightly grace.

Brydone's brave ward, I saw him stand,[7]
Fame humbly offering her hand;
And near his kinsman's rustic band,[8]
With one accord,
Lamenting their late blessed land
Must change its lord.

[1] Originally written 'only.'

[2] A compliment to Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, the 'Bonny Lass of Ballochmyle,' in whom certainly, when Maria Whitefoord departed, the poetic worshipper of beauty found a new goddess not inferior to the former divinity.

[3] Cumnock.—*B.*

[4] Mr Farquhar Gray.—*B.*

[5] Auchinskieth.

[6] Caprington.—*B.* Cunningham of Caprington, Baronet.

[7] Colonel Fullarton.—*B.*

[8] Dr Fullarton.—*B.*

The owner of a pleasant spot,
Near sandy wilds I did him note;[1]
A heart too warm, a pulse too hot,
At times o'erran;
But large in every feature wrote,
Appeared the man.

SONG,

IN THE CHARACTER OF A RUINED FARMER.

TUNE—*Go from my window, Love, do.*

The sun he is sunk in the west,
All creatures retirèd to rest,
While here I sit all sore beset
With sorrow, grief, and wo;
And it 's O, fickle Fortune, O!

The prosperous man is asleep,
Nor hears how the whirlwinds sweep;
But Misery and I must watch
The surly tempest blow:
And it 's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lies the dear partner of my breast,
Her cares for a moment at rest:
Must I see thee, my youthful pride,
Thus brought so very low!
And it 's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lie my sweet babies in her arms,
No anxious fear their little heart alarms;
But for their sake my heart doth ache,
With many a bitter throe:
And it 's O, fickle Fortune, O!

I once was by Fortune carest,
I once could relieve the distrest:
Now, life's poor support hardly earned,
My fate will scarce bestow:
And it 's O, fickle Fortune, O!

No comfort, no comfort I have!
How welcome to me were the grave!
But then my wife and children dear,
O whither would they go?
And it 's O, fickle Fortune, O!

[1] Orangefield.—*B.* Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, near Ayr, was an active patron of Burns.

O whither, O whither shall I turn!
All friendless, forsaken, forlorn!
For in this world Rest or Peace
I never more shall know!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

No. 12 (p. 142).—EXCURSIONS OF SUMMER AND AUTUMN, 1787.

In previous narratives of Burns's life, the events of the summer and autumn of 1787 are to a serious extent incorrectly arranged.

Dr Currie represents Burns as returning from Mauchline to Edinburgh in June, and thence setting out on the West Highland ride which terminated at Dumbarton. There is no apparent evidence for his having returned at this time to Edinburgh; neither is there any direct evidence against it; but it is certainly very unlikely that Burns would take Edinburgh on his way from Mauchline to the West Highlands. It would be like a gentleman taking London on his way from Bristol to Wales.

The learned biographer is certainly wrong in placing the tour by Stirling to Harvieston with Dr Adair in August. Burns was at Mauchline till the 7th of that month, and on the 23d he wrote a letter dated from Nicol's house in Edinburgh. On the 25th, he and Nicol set out on their postchaise journey to the Highlands. It is very unlikely that Burns would have a ten days' tour between the 7th and 23d of August, and so early as the 25th set out again over the same ground—ground, too, which Currie represents him as having passed over for a first time in June. But it is not merely unlikely. It is impossible to read Burns's journal of the tour in August, and his letter of the 28th of that month, describing to Gavin Hamilton his relations at Harvieston, and believe that he had ever before passed along the ground between Edinburgh and Stirling, or that he had seen that Harvieston family for a space of ten days within the last three weeks. In short, there neither could be an excursion from Edinburgh to the West Highlands in June (necessarily involving Stirling), nor an earlier visit to Stirling and Harvieston in August, than that described in the text as beginning on the 25th.

Dr Currie was probably misled on these points by a misrecollection of Dr Adair, writing at a distance of a dozen years, from an event the chronology of which had probably not deeply impressed him at first. Finding Dr Adair speaking, in an August tour, of a previous visit of Burns to Stirling (when the disloyal lines were written), the biographer had imagined that the poet was there in the course of the West Highland tour of June. To obtain a sufficiency of time for the second tour, before the commencement of the poet's journey with Nicol, he took it upon him to set down the latter event as occurring about the beginning of September,

although in his own second volume he gives a letter of Burns, written at Inverness on the 5th of that month, and another of the 17th, in which the poet tells that he returned to Edinburgh *yesterday*, after a journey of *twenty-two days*. These form grave charges of inaccuracy against Dr Currie: and our wonder at his not detecting Dr Adair's error is increased when we find in his own edition a series of letters of Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre, written towards the end of October, evidently regarding Burns's visit to himself as an event which had just taken place, and alluding to his call on Lady Clackmannan, which Adair led him to place in August, as a still later particular. Apparently to subdue the tone of this last inconsistency, the learned editor gives the gentlewoman's name as 'Lady C.,' a trick of editorship (if it be one) which could scarcely have been expected from so respectable a person.

In the Life and Letters of Burns by Allan Cunningham, the imaginary visit to Stirling in June is particularised on speculation, and two brief dateless letters, written by the poet at Ochtertyre, are involved in the same trip, although containing personal allusions evidently applicable to a later period, and geographical details utterly irreconcilable with the idea of an excursion ending at Dumbarton. Cunningham, likewise, implicitly adopts the Adair tour as an event of August, and, in a lamentable attempt to reconcile it with the Nicol tour, inserts in the former the description of the Harvieston family, which he must have plainly seen belonged to the latter. He clenches all Dr Currie's errors as to Ochtertyre and Clackmannan; and after making a most extraordinary porridge of the poet's autumn, says very naïvely, that we see in it a mind 'unfitted with an aim:' 'he moved much about without any visible purpose in his motions.'

The present editor has used his best endeavours to read off the proceedings of the autumn according to the authentic documents relative to it. He has been forced to arrive at the conclusion, that the Adair trip took place, not in August, but in October; and this notwithstanding a very formidable pleading which has reached him from an authoritative quarter, that it is a late period of the year for the Harvieston folk to have adopted for their great annual washing. Burns first visits the Carse of Falkirk, Bannockburn, and Stirling on the 25th and 26th of August. In his diary, and in his letter of the 26th to Muir, he describes these places with the freshness of novelty. He then inscribes the fatal lines on the inn window. On the 27th, he pays his first visit to Harvieston, a kind of episode in the main tour, and an affair of a single day. That scene he also describes with the feelings of novelty. The tour ends on the 16th September, and he receives a letter from Josiah Walker, dated the 13th, reminding him of a promised visit to Sir William Murray at Ochtertyre. He proceeds with Adair early in October—breaks the treasonous pane at Stirling—introduces Adair at Harvieston—even the storm by which he was detained two days at the foot of the

Jchils happens pat to this time[1]—then he goes on to Mr Ramsay, thence to Sir William Murray at Ochtertyre—finally returns by Clackmannan, to see the old lady of whom Mr Ramsay had told him. The indissoluble connection between the Ochtertyre visit and that to Lady Clackmannan is substantiated by Ramsay's letter of the 22d of October, and Burns's own epistle to Mr Miller of the 20th, now for the first time printed; and this connection is nearly enough to settle the whole question.

What finally sets it at rest is a document, lighted upon since the above was written, and alluded to in the text, shewing that Burns was a subject of legal proceedings, and made a personal appearance in Edinburgh on account of them on the 15th of August. Arriving in Edinburgh from Mossgiel on the 7th, engaged in these legal matters on and perhaps *before* the 15th, writing to Robert Ainslie from Nicol's house on the 23d, and setting out on the postchaise journey with Nicol on the 25th, there is no time for a ten days' tour with Dr Adair during this month. No such tour, therefore, took place at that time. The early and middle part of October is the first clear space of time which will suffice for a ten days' tour: it is also the first sufficient space of time prior to the setting in of winter, after which any such tour was not likely to have taken place.

No. 13 (p. 201).—BURNS'S MARRIAGE: WAS IT EVER ANNULLED?

On this subject a memorial, repeating the circumstances which have been detailed in the present work, was submitted to a counsel learned in the law. The answer was as follows:—

'A marriage once existing cannot be annulled but by divorce. The destruction of documents may place impediments in the way of proving that it had existed, just as burning a bloody shirt may render it more difficult to prove a murder; but the *fact* cannot be altered. The subsequent formal marriage and the church censure would go for nothing, except in the way of evidence, and to throw doubt on what might be adduced on the other side.

'The question then is—*was* there a marriage? Certainly there was, if the document was a declaration by Burns that Jean

[1] *Edin. Oct.* 12.—On Wednesday night (10th), we had a violent storm of wind and rain, during which the *Janet*, Logan, from the Highlands, laden with kelp, was driven ashore at Newhaven.

Montrose, Oct. 12.—Last night there was a prodigious storm of wind and rain, wind N.W. Various accidents to shipping took place.

Newcastle, Oct. 13.—Wednesday, we had a heavy rain, with a violent gale of wind from the north and north-east, which continued with unremitting fury till next morning, and occasioned a great flood in the Tyne.—*Newspapers passim.*

Armour was his wife, or that he had married her, and she accepted it in that light at the time. The following from Erskine will shew that the rule is much older than Burns's day:—

'"Marriage may be without doubt perfected by the consent of parties declared by writing, provided the writing be so conceived as necessarily to impart their present consent. The proof of marriage is not confined to the testimonies of the clergyman and witnesses present at the ceremony. The subsequent acknowledgment of it by the parties is sufficient to support the marriage, if it appear to have been made not in a jocular manner, but seriously, and with deliberation."

'The difficulties have occurred where the acknowledgment appeared to be with no intention to hold a marriage, but to serve some temporary purpose. Undoubtedly, if Burns had married anybody else, he would have been guilty of bigamy.'

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. and R. Chambers.